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JACK BRAG.

CHAPTER I.

“MY dear Johnny,” said the respectable widow Brag to her son, “what is the good of your going on in this way? Here, instead of minding the business, you are day after day galloping and gallivanting, steeple-chasing, fox-hunting, lord-hunting, a wasting your time and your substance, the shop going to old Nick, and *you* getting dipped instead of your candles.”

“Mother,” said Jack, “don’t talk so foolishly! You are of the old school,—excellent in your way, but a long way behindhand: the business is safe enough. You cannot suppose, with the education I have had, I can meddle with moulds, or look after sixes, tens, fours to the pound, or farthing rushlights;—no, thanks

to my enlightenment, I flatter myself I soar a little higher than that."

"No nonsense, Johnny!" said Mrs. Brag. "All you have now, and all you have spent since your poor father's death, was gained by your father's enlightenment of his customers: and how do you suppose I can carry on the trade if you will not now and then attend to it?"

"Take my advice, my dear mother," said Jack, "and marry. I'm old enough now not to care a fig for a father-in-law;—marriage is the plan, as I say to my friend Lord Tom—straight up, right down, and no mistake. Get a sensible, stir-about husband, who does not mind grubbing, and hasn't a nose——"

"Hasn't a nose?" interrupted Mrs. Brag.

"I don't mean literally," said Jack, "but sportingly;—does not mind the particular scent of tallow—you understand. Let him into the tricks of the trade: you will still be queen-bee of the hive, — make *him* look after the drones while you watch the wax."

"And while *you*, Johnny, lap up the honey," said the queen-bee.

"Do what you like," said her son, "only marry—'marry come up,' as somebody says in a play."

"But, John," said Mrs. Brag, "I have no desire to change my condition."

"Nor I that you should," said Jack ; "but I wish you would change your name. As long as 'Brag, wax and tallow-chandler,' sticks up on the front of the house, with three dozen and four dangling dips swinging along the shop-front, like so many malefactors expiating their crimes, I live in a perpetual fever lest my numerous friends should inquire whether I am one of the firm or the family."

"Johnny," said Mrs. Brag, "you are a silly fellow. What is there to be ashamed of in honest industry? If all the fine folks whom you go a-hunting with, and all the rest of it, like you, and are really glad to see you, it is for yourself alone: and if they, who must know by your name and nature that you can never be one of themselves, care a button for you, your trade, so as you do not carry it about with you, will do you no harm. What

difference is it to them how you get your thorough-bred horses, your smart scarlet coat, neat tops, and white cords, so as you have them? —they won't give you any new ones when they are gone."

"It is all very well talking," said Johnny, "but I never should show my face amongst them if I once thought they guessed at my real trade. I live in a regular worry as it is. If ever a fellow asks me if I was at Melton last year, that moment I think of the shop — 'pretty mould of a horse' tingles in my ears — 'sweet dip of the country' sets me doubting; and, only last week, a proposal to go 'cross country and meet Lord Hurricane's harriers at Hampton Wick nearly extinguished me."

"And what now, Johnny," said Mrs. Brag, "do you think these lords take you for, if not for a tallow-chandler?"

"An independent gentleman," said Jack.

"That is to say," replied his mother, "a gentleman who has nothing to depend upon."

"They look upon me as an agreeable rattle," said John.

"One that has often been in the watchman's hands too," said the old lady.

"I talk big and ride small," said Jack, "I am always up with the hounds—never flinch at anything,—am the pride of the field wherever I go,—and in steeple-chases of infinite value."

"And very little weight, my dear Johnny," interrupted his mother.

"One of my dearest friends," continued Brag, "Lord Tom Towzle, a deuce of a fellow amongst the females, is going to put me up as a candidate at the Travellers."

"What, riders for respectable houses?" said Mrs. Brag: "and a very proper club too."

"Respectable houses!" said Jack. "Poh! not a bit of it! What! bagmen in buggies with boxes of buttons in the boots? No, no! the Travellers—*par excellence*."

"Par what?" said Mrs. Brag. "What, d'ye mean the fine Club-house in Pall Mall which you showed me the out side of, last King's birth night?"

"The same," said Brag. "Now, if I had

stuck to the naked, as Lord Tom says — told the plain unvarnished—I never could have qualified. Lord Tom asked me if I should like to belong to the Travellers ;’ — in course I said yes — straight up, right down, and no mistake. Well, then he asks me if I could qualify ; — so not quite understanding him, he says, ‘ Have you ever been in Greece ?’ — ‘ Yes,’ said I : — I *might* have added ‘ up to the elbows often ;’ didn’t though. Had him dead. Down he whips my name, and calls in Sir Somebody Something out of the street to second me.”

“ If you should get in there Johnny,” said Mrs. Brag, “ do get ’em to give up gas and take to oil on illumination nights. But what I think is, somebody is sure to find you out, Johnny.”

“ Time enough,” said Jack. “ I ’m going it now smooth and soft across the country, increasing my acquaintance ; falling into the society of elegant females — women of fashion, with beautiful faces and liberal hearts ; — introduced to three last week — proud as peacocks to everybody else, delighted with *me* ; — met them at

Ascot — cold collation in the carriage — champagne iced from London ; — got on capital — never was so happy in my life — hottest weather I ever felt ; spirits mounted — I was the delight of the party — told them half a dozen stories of myself, and made them laugh like cockatoos, but I was bundled all of a heap by the Marquis of Middlesdale, who had been at luncheon with the King, who, in passing the barouche, gave me a smack on the back you might have heard to Egham, and cried out, ‘ Jack, this is a melting day, isn’t it ? ’ ”

“ He meant it, Johnny, depend upon it,” said Mrs. Brag.

“ I’ve no doubt he did,” said Brag, “ for it was as hot as ever I felt it — ”

“ — In the back shop,” interrupted his mother. “ But pray, Johnny, where do these people think you live ? ”

“ At a great house in Grosvenor-street,” said Jack, “ next door to What-d’ye-call-’em’s Hotel : my name is on the door, and my address on my card.”

“ But you don’t live there,” said Mrs. Brag.

“Not I,” replied the son: “I only rent the door.”

“How d’ye mean?” said his mother.

“Why, I went to the man,” said Brag, “who keeps the house. ‘Now, sir,’ said I, ‘I want to rent four square inches of your panels. He was puzzled for the moment; but I was down upon him in no time, and no mistake. — Out I pulls from my pocket a brass plate of those precise dimensions, whereon is engraven ‘Mr. Brag.’ — ‘What will you take per annum,’ said I, ‘to let this be screwed on to your door, and let your servant take in my cards and letters?’ Startled him a little at first: however, he entered himself for the plate, acceded to my proposition, — and so for the trifling consideration of four guineas per annum, and a tip to the slavey, I get the credit of five windows in front, three stories high, in one of the best streets in London.”

“But do none of your friends ever expect to be let in?” said Mrs. Brag.

“Yes,” said Brag, “for a good thing now and then, — and so they are, pretty often. Long

head, mother—have it here”—tapping his forehead with his fore finger — “look simple with my fresh colour and curly hair, but as deep as Garrick—cannot write your X’s, Z’s with me, —else, in course, they might expect admission. ‘Not at home,’ is always the answer. ‘Out of town?’ is the next question ; — ‘Yes,’ is the next answer. — ‘Where?’ comes next.— ‘Down at his little place in Surrey.’ That finishes it. They lodge their pasteboard and away they go.”

“Little place in Surrey !” said Mrs. Brag ; —“ why, what d’ye mean ?—have you a country-house too ?”

“Country-house !” said Brag. “Lord bless your dear heart, not I ! Nothing but my old lodging, on the second floor, No. 37, at the carpenter’s, corner of Caterpillar-row, Kennington.”

“And *that* you call your little place in Surrey, do you ?” said Mrs. Brag.

“Yes, mother, and no fib neither,” said Brag. “It is almost the littlest place I ever saw in my life ; and as for Caterpillar-row, if

it isn't in Surrey I know nothing of going 'cross a country."

"Ah, Johnny, Johnny," said his respected parent with a mingled look of sorrow and admiration, "you never will mend till it is too late!"

"Mother," said Jack, "now you say that, I think I shall be too late for Lord Tom Towzle. We are going off for Wigglesford to mark out a line. All ready for a run: we have got no mercy in us, — none of your bowling-green, daisy-cutting work for us — no, we'll try to pick out rasping fences, bottomless brooks, and ditches as wide as rivers; — a steeple-chase without killing a horse or two, cracking a collar-bone, slipping a shoulder, or pitching an out-and-outer on the top of his conk, is no fun in the world."

"Ah! well, well," said Mrs. Brag, "I wish you would give a little time to the books and the business: some day you'll repent this."

"Not I, mother," said Jack; "I can pull up any day and marry. I never yet saw the woman I could not win — they are all ready to

eat me up: in course, as the book says, I am the more wary—hang back a bit. Don't you see, as I get on in the world, I get up; and if I can marry a Lady Sally or a Lady Susan—eh! won't that be nice!—'specially if there happens to be an odd thirty or forty thousand pounds tacked to the title."

"Don't flatter yourself Johnny," replied Mrs. Brag, shaking her head: "*that* scheme will never answer."

"You'll see," said Jack;—"I say nothing, but you'll see. If I were to sit down and write an account of my adventures with the females, I should be run after like a sight. The females of fashion that I meet at the races call me 'dear Johnny' as it is."

"I wonder you are not afraid of seeing the ghost of your poor father," said the widow.

"What! the Governor?" cried Jack; "never mind ghosts nor Governors, here is my Leporello. So I'm off. Good-b'ye, dear mother!—you'll see me soon again,—I shall be back by Saturday, and so keep snug Sunday."

"Where? at your town-house in Grosve-

nor-street," said the old lady, "or your little place in Surrey?"

"Neither, I take it," said Jack, looking as wise as a very foolish person could. "I devote Sunday afternoon to a very select society—eh!—females of fashion, delightful creatures, and all that. So adieu!"

Kissing the matron's cheek, away went our hero in order to revel in all the luxuries of sport, and in the society which, he admitted, kept him in a fever while he was in it: not that the true circle of his aristocratic acquaintance was particularly large, however much he nominally increased it by dubbing every man his friend with whom he had happened to hunt in the same field or dine in a public company of three hundred and fifty; and every well-dressed woman a lady of fashion whom he happened to see with the tigers in whose set he mingled.

Mrs. Brag, who felt extremely anxious about her son and herself, saw that the business was rapidly "burning down." The introduction of oil had superseded wax; and since that, the

adoption of gas had superseded oil. No efforts were made to improve the concern, and all she heard, was of considerable drafts from the account at the banker's, and very small payments into it; and Mrs. Brag, a comely, hearty-looking body of her time of life, began to ponder the words which her dutiful son had with little apparent earnestness let drop, as to changing her condition, with a view to increase the reputation of the house and extend its sphere of action, while the name at sight of which her son trembled, might be withdrawn. She did not clearly see her way in this proceeding: nor had she either fixed her affections upon any particular object, nor was she conscious that she had attracted the regards of any suitable partner. However, the notion was entertained—the idea had been started; and how the exemplary matron set her means to work, in order to effect the grand object, we may, if we live long enough, yet discover.

The reader perhaps, in the few pages which he has yet either been doomed to, or condescended to read, has already discovered what sort of

man Mr. John Brag is, or was. It seemed best to give a short domestic scene in the candle-manufactory by way of prelude to the genteel comedy in which the gay deceiver is destined to perform; and it will be only necessary to keep in mind the sage yet ineffective lesson of the dear old body to whom her affectionate son recommended matrimony, in order duly to appreciate the performance of her "pretty boy," who, spite of his colour and his curls, was verging upon what may be called the "shady side" of thirty.

Old Mrs. Brag had, as Miss Scropps, married at seventeen; and although, as far as my own experience goes, I admit I never saw such a thing, she was said to be a lady of nearly fifty-five years of age, somewhere about the period at which this glimpse at the history of her yet unrecorded family begins.

It may be supposed that I should apologise for bringing the eyes, or perhaps the noses, of my readers in contact with all the arcana of Mr. John's shop; but I have a reason for doing so. I propose not merely to show by illustration how

very ridiculous a pretender must always be, but to exhibit a striking instance of the retributive justice which seems somehow to keep the world in an equipoise, by exhibiting the wonderful utility of which the meanest and stupidest animal extant may prove; as *vide* (to quote the words of James the First, about Dæmonology) the fable of the Lion, the Mouse, and the Meshes.

Soar we then for a moment from the gloom of the tallow-chandler to a more charming region, and to people of a different mould,—and yet who, as the reader will see, may in the course of events become connected, and intimately too, with our sprightly gentleman in the scarlet jacket and white cords. Let us, therefore, betake ourselves to the *boudoir* of one of the most charming young widows in England, where she is sitting *tête-à-tête* with her unmarried sister, talking over two absent gentlemen, whose tempers and dispositions are the immediate subject of their conversation.

Mrs. Dallington, the elder of the two ladies so engaged, had been married at nineteen,

merely to oblige her father, (who died six months afterwards,) to a gentleman of the name which she still bore; who, to all the other merits which distinguished his character, emulated in a high degree the fox-hunting propensities of the tallow-man in the white cords of whom we have just spoken. He was, however, rich, and a gentleman, and had a right to make as great a fool of himself as he pleased,—and so he did: and the foolery began in his leaving a beautiful wife, with a pair of eyes as black as sloes and as bright as diamonds, alone and moping, while he was amusing himself by following his dogs, which dogs were following something certainly not sweeter than themselves across the country.

Mr. Dallington, who rode about nine stone four, one fine morning, when the scent lay “uncommon strong,” the dogs in full cry, the field in a state of the highest excitement, the fox going away right on-end across a heavy country, which would probably break the hearts of some of the horses and the necks of some of the riders, met with a slight accident, which in

fox-hunting goes for very little, but which in its proverbial or rather convivial parallel, matrimony, goes for something more. In switching a rasper, the exemplary and high-spirited gentleman missed his tip and pitched right upon his head in the middle of a ditch, where he remained exactly long enough to make the lovely wife he had left at home a very delightful widow.

Dallington, or at least what had been Dallington in the early part of the day, was put upon a hurdle and taken to a farmhouse ; whence the melancholy intelligence was conveyed to his lady, who, with all the respect she felt for her late father's judgment in selecting him for her partner for life, considered the event which had just taken place as philosophically as any woman of strong feelings and a tender disposition might be supposed to endure any sudden shock which results from the death of a fellow-creature.

True, most true it is, she never had felt that sort of love for the husband forced upon her, as a " fine match," which a woman ought to feel for the being who is destined (if he be fortu-

nate enough) to share her hopes, her wishes, and her happiness. Mrs. Dallington was a creature all intellect, all vivacity, all fire; full of arch playfulness and gaiety of heart, and as completely the reverse of her quiet, timid, and sensitive sister, as light of darkness, fire of water, or any other two unmeetable opposites.

There are many adages connected with love and matrimony which it must be admitted are, however forcible in themselves, extremely contradictory of each other. But, in the course of considerable experience in such matters, I am apt to imagine that the real truth is—supposing always exceptions to general rules—that women are most apt to prefer men the least like themselves; and men, *vice versâ*. It is the pride of a little man to have a large wife; it is the taste of a tall man to possess a short one: a fair woman admires a dark Lothario; while a bright-eyed brunette delights in blazing away upon a fair Romeo. A learned man eschews a blue partner; he relaxes into ease in the company of his ordinarily-educated better-half, and reposes from his graver studies in the agree-

able common-places of an intelligent but not abstruse associate ; while the learned lady prefers the plodding spouse, and never desires that he should meddle with her arts and sciences, but merely wishes him to exert his energies in the comfortable arrangement of their establishment, and the acquirement of the supplies necessary to set off her own attractions in their most alluring form before the visitors whom she chooses to invite.

The assimilation of tempers and dispositions by which happiness grows between married couples is, in fact, a habit most amiable and advantageous: the handwritings of men and their wives become like each other in the course of time. But whether the love of contraries in the abstract, be or be not so general as some observers would have it to be, certain it is that in the particular individual case before us it did exist.

Sir Charles Lydiard had been, just about the period at which the reader is introduced to him, some two years paying his addresses to the vivacious widow Dallington. He was a man of high principle, rigid honour, polished

manners, and most amiable disposition ; but he was cold, reserved, and even suspicious of the object of his affections. His suspicions, or perhaps they might be more justly called doubts, arose not from the slightest want of confidence in the candour or sincerity of the lady, but in a want of confidence in himself. He might fairly have said to his heroine with Steele's hero :—

———— “Of you I am not jealous,—

’Tis my own indelert that gives me fears :

And tenderness forms dangers where they ’re not.

I doubt and envy all things that approach thee.”

There he was, the constant, faithful lover, never away from the house, sitting and sighing “like furnace,” listening to the gaities of Mrs. Dalington’s conversation, a very spectre of despair, not ill described by the English Aristophanes in the person of one Harry Heetic, with a bunch of jonquils in his button-hole, looking dead and dressed, like the waxwork in Westminster Abbey. There was no animating him, no rousing him into a proposal ; his attachment had become habitual, and day after day the affair went on without “progressing,” as the Americans have it, one inch. And yet

the widow was devoted to Sir Charles. It must be admitted that she every morning expected *the* question ; but every evening that expectation was blighted, and the worthy baronet returned from his placid state of negative happiness to his solitary home, to lie awake for hours balancing the chances of matrimony, and endeavouring to make up his mind to the deciding inquiry which, if the real truth were told, he lingeringly delayed, apprehensive that it might meet with a negative certain not only to kill the hopes which sometimes outweighed his doubts, but to put an end to his acquaintance with the charming widow altogether.

While Sir Charles Lydiard remained thus drooping in the bright sunshine of Mrs. Dalington's eyes, her timid sister Blanche was undergoing a siege of a very different nature. Far from contenting himself, to use a military phrase, with sitting down before the place, and establishing a corps of observation merely to watch the enemy, Frank Rushton, who was more madly in love than ever dandy had been found to be for many years, had for the last three months,—the whole period, in fact, of

his acquaintance with her,—been assiduously and incessantly carrying on an attack upon the heart of his adorable Dulcinea ; and, as it appeared, with as little chance of making an impression as her sister had of exciting Sir Charles to an offer. In fact, the four players at this love-game were equally divided into the fiery and frosty ; but, which in the sequel made all the sport, as Mr. Brag would have called it, the partners were so curiously matched, and the icicles and sunbeams so regularly and heraldically counter-changed, that the lovers and their mistresses were the exact opposites of each other. It was extremely amusing to hear the discussions in which Sir Charles and his friend Rushton were in the habit of indulging.

“My dear Frank,” said Sir Charles, “your affection for Blanche is madness,—the way in which you go on, sets me in a fever : and as for the poor young creature herself, she is absolutely harassed out of her wits.”

“So *you* think, Sir Charles,” replied Frank ; “but it strikes *me* that her sister would not be less pleased with your society if you

were to follow my example. Why there you sit, moping and melancholy, as if you were on the edge of your own grave, instead of being on the verge of all earthly happiness: you look and languish, sigh and say nothing, and, like the Cardinal, 'die, and make no sign.' "

"It may be so," said the baronet,—*"I suppose it is so; but I cannot,—struggle as I may with my feelings,—I cannot overcome the doubts which seem to me to cloud the prospect of the felicity of which you talk so easily."*

"Doubts! my dear friend," said Rushton; "what doubts can you have? Your doubts are, in fact, jealousies,—and how needless! Mrs. Dallington has been a wife,—and never was a more exemplary wife in the world."

"Her trial was short," said Sir Charles; "nor should I call it a fair one,—her marriage was not one of love."

"Then so much the greater her credit for the conduct she observed," said Rushton.

"The struggle did not last long," replied Sir Charles: "her husband was killed within eight months of their marriage."

"She bore her loss like a Christian," said Rushton.

"Yes," sighed the baronet; "it is wonderful to behold the pious resignation of ladies in her position."

"Well," said Rushton, "if your apprehensions overcome your affection, and your doubts transcend your hopes, break off the acquaintance at once,—take your hat and go —"

"—And be neither missed nor inquired after, in all probability," said Lydiard.

"There you wrong your fair friend," said Rushton. "She values you, esteems you, and with a very little trouble on *your* part would love you. Your flame is so gentle, that it scarcely warms; and, like the fire in the grate there, if she did not occasionally stir it with good nature and kind looks, my belief is, it would go out entirely."

"My dear Rushton," said Sir Charles, "you entirely misunderstand my character, and the character of my affection for our charming friend: my doubts are the 'fruits of love.'"

“A most disagreeable harvest, Lydiard,” replied Rushton.

“True,” said Sir Charles, “but I cannot conquer them. You blame my caution and coldness ; but when I see you devoting yourself, hand over head, if I may so say, to the mild, quiet, timid, blushing creature, Blanche, I cannot, since I had the honour of introducing you to the family, but feel anxious on your account. I don’t believe one word of all those professions of meekness, and mildness, and modesty of which that young lady is so profusely liberal. I have seen her exchange looks with her sister,—while you, blinded by your passion, have seen nothing—which convince me that you would do well to scrutinise and consider before you plunge into the stormy ocean of matrimony.”

“Why,” said Rushton, “Blanche is something like Moore’s beautiful Nora Creena :

‘ Few her looks, but every one
Like unexpected light surprises.’ ”

“Egad !” said Lydiard, “the light I saw was both surprising and unexpected. I have some little experience in family telegraphs, but the signal she threw out was one not altogether

complimentary to *you*, for she seemed to me to be laughing at you."

"Don't be too sure of that, Charles," said Rushton. "I too have seen those telegraphic symptoms; and my opinion is, that if *you* were to adopt *my* style of proceeding, you would find the widow much less attentive to her sister's evolutions. But no;—you have fallen into a custom of going there day after day; you feel at your ease, you enjoy the society and conversation of a delightful person; and because you have nothing to excite you to action, so the affair goes on—not even a dash of jealousy to create a fermentation in your cup of nectar."

"There you mistake," said Lydiard. "I—I—certainly never have touched upon the subject—never opened my lips to a human being about it; but I am not quite so sure that it is not jealousy which keeps me backward and depresses me."

"Indeed!" said Rushton; "jealous! What of somebody who visits at the house?"

"Yes," said Sir Charles.

“Do you mean Sir Baggs Waddilove?” said Rushton.

“Psha—no.”

“Perhaps that Colonel Scramshaw?”

“Not a bit of it.”

“The Count?”

“What, Swagandstraddle!—No.”

“Lord Tom Towzle?”

“You burn,” said Sir Charles, “as the children say to the blinded one;—not of him, Frank—what think you of his friend.

“What, that horrid, vulgar dog, Brag,” said Rushton, “his toady—his spaniel?”

“Upon my honour, yes,” said Sir Charles.

“The deuce you are!” said Rushton; “that’s very odd.”

“It is,” said Lydiard. “I confess I am almost ashamed of being ruffled by such a fellow; but, somehow, Mrs. Dallington seems so much at her ease with him, notwithstanding his vulgarity, his glaring ignorance, and his unbounded impertinence, that, upon my honour, I cannot help thinking—you know women are very odd creatures, and I——”

“You surprise me, Lydiard,” said Rushton, “but not disagreeably. I have thought,—only don’t mention it—that Blanche has a sort of,—eh—you understand me—a partiality for him—I don’t know how it is; she certainly looks at the monster, now and then.”

“What,” interrupted Lydiard, “some more of her few unexpected lights, eh?”

“I cannot understand it,” said Rushton: “I suppose he entertains them with his absurdities, and his nonsense, and even his vanity, and his vulgarity. But I think we may both be pretty secure, that neither of such women as your widow and my Blanche could entertain a serious thought of a fellow of whom nobody knows anything except as Lord Tom Towzle’s tiger, especially in a house into which Lord Tom himself finds it particularly difficult to get the *entrée*.”

“No,” said Lydiard, “one would not think there was much danger; and yet—yet you *will* allow it is very odd indeed that we should both have been struck with the same notion?”

“So it is,” replied Rushton. “However, as

far as *I* am concerned, I am determined to fathom the affair to the bottom. I love Blanche better than my life ; but if I thought—”

“ Stop, stop, Rushton,” interrupted the worthy baronet. “ What has gone with your stern reproof of my scepticism ? Here are *you* who have been just rallying me upon my doubts with regard to the loveliest of her sex, now coming to fathom an affair to the bottom which implicates in your mind the sincerity and single-heartedness of one of the purest, gentlest Nora Creenas that ever walked with her eyes cast down upon the earth.”

“ Hang the fellow !” said Rushton ; “ it is too ridiculous ! Besides, he is not often there. Yet, never mind—he may do good : the smallest wheel in a great piece of machinery has its work to perform to keep all the rest going. This stupid animal may serve to equalize our passions, and make us see clearer ; he will cool *me* and warm *you*, and who knows but it may turn out all for the best ?”

“ Why,” said Lydiard, “ the fact is pretty clear :—As we have not, even in this age of libe-

ality, arrived at so great a reform of the church as to establish the toleration of bigamy, he can marry but one of the ladies ; and, as far as I am concerned, if my adorable widow has a taste which would lead her to admit the pretensions of that miserable little animal, I am quite sure it never could be diverted into a passion for me : and so, Mr. Rushton, if he conquer, he is perfectly welcome to the fruits of his triumph."

" Ah, that's it ! " said Rushton : " there are prudence, philosophy, wisdom, and half a dozen other splendid qualities, combined ! But as for *me*, if he were to be smiled upon in earnest by Blanche, it would be the last gleam of sunshine one of us should see : he never should live to enjoy the happiness of which he had deprived me ! "

" Now, Rushton, " said Sir Charles, " how unjust, how inconsiderate that is ! If Blanche smile on him and not on you, it is a clear proof that she prefers him. Why make her miserable by killing the little man ? You might as well shoot her poodle or wring the neck of her canary-bird. "

How much farther this dialogue which was hereabouts interrupted, might have been carried, it is not in my power to say ; but sufficient has been developed to the reader to show that the incomparable Jack Brag, by dint of the equivocal introduction of his master Lord Tom Towzle, had obtained footing at least in one respectable and agreeable house. It is, as Sir Charles Lydiard says, a matter of impossibility to ascertain the particular qualities or circumstances by which women of station and talent, as well as their inferiors in rank and intellect, are captivated. Certain it is, that after once Mr. Brag had been admitted to Mrs. Dallington's house, he was a visitor there as frequently as he could contrive to manage it ; and, as we have seen, although his other avocations were numerous, he had contrived to unsettle the minds of two most respectable gentlemen of totally different characters and dispositions, both pursuing similar objects by different roads.

We must now recur to Mr. Brag himself, and his career in other places, into which the bright eyes of the gay widow and her lovely sister cannot be expected to penetrate.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Mr. John Brag left his respected mother, he hurried off to the rendezvous of his sporting friends, whence they proceeded in a body to mark out the line of country for the steeple-chase. In this operation he exhibited, as he fancied, all the tactics of the most experienced quartermaster-general. In endeavouring, however, to elucidate the difficulties of a leap which, he thought essential to the effect of the race, he came somewhat unexpectedly off his horse. A little dirt, and a bruise or two out of sight, of which he gave no evidence, were all the consequences of this performance; and having made every necessary arrangement for the exhibition of the following day, he hastened to a small public-house a little way removed from the high road, which rejoiced in the sign of the

“Duke of Marlborough,” in order to change his clothes and prepare himself for a flying visit to the shop, to which a promise made to his mother in the morning was carrying him in the afternoon.

When some of Brag’s associates in the field questioned him as to his cause of hurry, he made his excuses in so confused a tone, that he left, as he meant to do, an impression upon the minds of his country cronies, that he was under an engagement to the illustrious descendant of the hero of Blenheim and Malplaquet, rather than to the landlord of the house where the pictured warrior swang “high in air” before the door. However, it was all “straight up, right down, and no mistake;” and the pretender “cut ’cross the country” to his hostelry, at which had been deposited his portmanteau “down per coach,” which contained his clothes for the two coming days’ performances,—his pet scarlet coat and white cords by way of a show, and if necessary a pink silk jacket with yellow sleeves for the steeple-chase.

When he arrived at the goal—the sign of the

“Duke of Marlborough,” he was surprised to find the only sitting-room of the “hotel” occupied. A stranger, who had been driven into the house for shelter from the “pitiless pelt-ing” of a hail-storm, in which the admirable tallow-chandler had been drenched, was sitting before the fire—agreeable in any season in England, but particularly so in the equivocal weather of a British spring—reading the County Press of the preceding Saturday, redolent of tobacco, and stamped with the circular impressions of sundry pewter-pot bottoms which had reposed upon its columns.

“I say, Stubbs,” said our hero, who was known to the landlord as ‘the most sportingest gentleman as ever come down to them parts,’ “what’s this? I ordered my dinner this morning”—(his luncheon with the Duke of Marlborough,)—“and find the room engaged;—what’s this?”

An attempt on the part of Stubbs to soothe the boiling rage of Brag, by sundry qualifying expressions of regret, and a few “I dare says,” and “The gentleman won’t be long,” and seve-

ral such pacificatory observations, was happily seconded by the occupant of the parlour himself; who upon beholding the inflation of the little Cockney, whose vulgar red and white face was illuminated by the fire which raged within, rose from his seat and said, in the best possible humour, that he feared he was an intruder, but that he had been driven in by stress of weather; that he had ordered some luncheon, which he concluded was nearly ready; and that if the gentleman would permit him to do so, he should be happy to share the repast with him, which, as he seemed to be himself wet and cold, would perhaps not be disagreeable to him.

“ Oh,” said Brag, “ I’m not the chap to quarrel about trifles : only, I certainly, when I sent my horses down here, did say I should come and dine here ; and I have been here often before, and I never was served so till to-day. However, I’m much obliged by your civility, and haven’t the least objection to join you, each of us in course paying, share and share alike.”

“ Oh, as you please,” said the stranger, in

whose eye there lurked a laughing smile, and who seemed satisfied, by the little he had seen of his new and important acquaintance, that he should find something like amusement in the cultivation of a temporary friendship with him.

“ I’ll just step up-stairs,” said Brag, “ and cast my skin, as I call it ; and by that time, Stubbs, the luncheon will be ready.”

“ In five minutes, sir,” said Stubbs.

“ I say,” said Brag as he went along the passage, “ who is that chap in the parlour ?”

“ I haven’t a notion, sir,” said the landlord. “ He came here in the midst of that pelting hail-storm about half an hour ago, on a fine strong horse which is now in the stable, and which seems to have had a pretty sharpish run somehow ; and he ordered a fire to be lighted and some chops to be got ready, and said he would stop an hour or two.”

“ No servant ?” said Brag.

“ No.”

“ Don’t carry bags ?” asked Brag.

“ No,” replied Stubbs.

“ Seems genteel,” said the tallow-chandler ;

“no chance of anything wrong?—plain drest man on a fine horse—eh, don’t you understand? straight up, right down—eh, no mistake. No chance of highwaymen now-a-days?”

“Lor’, no, sir,” said Stubbs; “such a thought never entered my head. To be sure, he looked at your two hunters in the stable, and asked Jem who they belonged to.”

“What did he say?” said Brag.

“To one Squire Brag,” said Stubbs; “a gentleman from London.”

“Right, quite right,” said Brag: “no occasion to tell everybody the truth. And he admired them, did he?”

“Indeed he did,” said Stubbs.

“Oh, all right, no mistake,” said Brag, delighted to have unconsciously impressed upon the mind of his “promiscuous acquaintance” the character of his pretensions to consideration and his right of swagger. “I’ll just go and run my eye over *his* nag before I go into the parlour, and then we shall be on a footing, eh?”

Stubbs bowed; and Brag proceeded to change his clothes.

While he was performing that operation, the ever-active landlord added another knife and fork to the table already prepared for his other visitor: of which opportunity the stranger availed himself to inquire who the curious little gentleman in the green jacket and white cords might be; and in answer to his question touching that important subject, he was accurately informed by mine host, as far as he knew;—that he was a gentleman of large fortune from the City, he believed, who was in the habit of hunting with all the hounds in the metropolitan counties: that he usually kept his horses there; that he was the owner of the two which the gentleman had so much admired; that that he was a choice spirit, and mixed in very high company; all of which information the strange gentleman seemed to receive with considerable satisfaction—probably, as Stubbs the landlord thought, because he should feel himself honoured and gratified by the countenance and society of so distinguished an individual as Brag, and because he inwardly rejoiced at having made a point of showing so much cour-

tesy and attention on his first arrival to a gentleman of such respectability and importance.

The stranger's inquiries and the landlord's elucidations had scarcely ended, before the volatile Cockney made his re-appearance.

"Come, Stubbs," cried he, rubbing his hands as he entered the little sanded parlour, "be alive, my fine fellow! up with the chops! no nonsense—sharp's the word and quick's the motion, eh?—straight up, right down, and no mistake."

"They will be ready in two minutes, sir," said the landlord as he quitted the apartment.

"That's the way I manage 'em," said Brag; "none of your crawlers for me. I dare say you have been waiting ever so long for your feed; they don't mind strangers—everything is habit, sir,—used to *me*—know I won't stand upon trifles. I pay ready money, and don't stint—eh? that's the way I keep 'em all alive.—Are you from town to-day?"

"No," said the stranger; "I am on my road across the country. I rode farther than I intended, and was caught in the last storm."

"Oh," said Brag, beginning to exercise what

he considered his tact in ascertaining the calling of his companion ; “ you are not going straight along ? ”

“ No,” replied his new friend, “ merely taking a canter.”

“ Blowing away the cobwebs, as my friend Lord Tom Towzle says,” said Brag, looking at himself in the miserable glass which surmounted the mantel-shelf, adjusting his shirt-collar, and combing out his curls, of which he was as vain as a peacock of his tail. “ I never had harder work : pitched right over my little hack’s head, trying to show my friend Lord Wagly, the right-earnest way of taking a double fence. To be sure, it was too much for the poor little thing, and it served me right. I was spilt—up again in a minute—all, as quick as Queen Elizabeth. I say, that’s a fine horse of yours in the stable——Stir the fire—hem,—or lend me the poker——eh ?—capital nag, I calculate, as the Yankees say ? ”

“ Yes,” said the stranger, “ a fine serviceable animal : I ride pretty heavy, and require something strong to carry me. You have two clever

animals in the boxes here ; I assure you I had been admiring them very much before you arrived."

"Yes," said Brag, "nice tits, I flatter myself: I never had two horses that suited me better. I have—let me see—eight—no, nine—yes, nine—much of a muchness ; four in Leicestershire, two here, and the rest in London—nursing a bit, that's my way. I say sport's sport—never overwork kind animals—don't break their hearts even if you break their backs. So I keep enough to do it easy : for, as I said to Towzle, what's the use of plenty of money if you don't spend it?—eh ! The devil take this fellow ! *his* chops are not ready, though ours are—he ! Did you ever hear that before,—deuced good, eh?—old, I guess, and no mistake. I'll just give him a reminder."

Saying which, Brag seized the bell-rope, and gave it so tremendous a jerk, that down it came, bringing with it a cloud of dust, just at the moment that the door opened, and presented to the view of the guests, Stubbs, with the chops, and Rachel his daughter at his heels,

bearing a dish of potatoes, and a plate, whereon were deposited two vine leaves of blue ware, filled, the one with gherkins green, the other with walnuts brown.

Rachel was about seventeen, pretty and arch, with a pair of expressively lively black eyes. It was clear that Brag had seen them before, and that Rachel was not altogether insensible of their power; and while the assiduous Stubbs was regulating the plates and knives and forks at their proper angles on the table, the Nimrod of Cockaigne was slyly pressing the elbow — rather of the reddest — of the amiable Rachel, as she stretched one hand forward towards her unsuspecting parent, in the act of offering him the vegetables wherewith to deck the table. The stranger saw the dexterous manœuvre of his new companion, but appeared to be wholly unconscious of his insinuativeness.

“That’s a pretty girl,” said Brag after the parent and child had left the room,—“sly as a pussy cat. Dear me! the things one *does* see in this world! No matter where one goes, it is all

the same ! One has only to look at a girl, or a woman older a deuced deal than that, down she comes ; I don't know how it is, or how you find it, but, by Job," (as Brag always called Jove,) "it's a difficult thing to keep clear of the female sex ; I suppose it's something in one's manner—eh,—don't you think so ?—'pon my life I don't know."

"Why," said the stranger, "I am not in the habit of generalizing upon such subjects : a woman worthy of being won is not so easily won."

"Oh ! ah !" said Brag ; "you mean tip-top-pers, blue-stockings, nobbs, and all that kind of thing : I mean the sex taken what I call collectively. What do you drink, eh ? Ale, by Job ! Here, here, just put your head out of the door and call Stubbs ; you are nearer than me : I wish I hadn't broken the bell. Call him,—or stay ;—no, I'll speak to him,—have up *my* tap—eh,—don't you see ?"

The volubility and vanity of the Cockney amused as well as surprised the stranger, who, upon Brag's resuming his seat, endeavoured to

draw him back—which there was little difficulty in doing—to his old subject, by telling him one of the innumerable *bons mots* of the celebrated Sophie Arnould, who, when a Brag of her day, in descanting largely upon his success with a certain demoiselle of the rank and standing of Rachel Stubbs, told her that the affair had made a great noise in the neighbourhood, asked whether it were not occasioned by the lady's pattens. Brag did not see the application, and went on, as his acquaintance with his companion grew, and his familiarity ripened, to be extremely communicative, most especially upon his own successes in the way of "Don-Juanism."

The *sederunt* of the companions was considerably lengthened by a return of bad weather. The rain and hail again poured down in torrents; and Brag, who denounced wine in such a place, resolved upon keeping out the cold with some hot mixture. The stranger, who was also weather-bound, seemed not altogether disinclined to follow his companion's example; and they drew their chairs towards the fire, in order

to wait with patience for a brighter sky ; which, as the spring had set in with its accustomed severity, they were not soon certain of seeing.

“ I am told,” said a lady of rank to the Persian Ambassador, who was in this country so many years since, that, for the sake of my female friends, I will not say how many,—“ I am told, sir, that in *your* country they worship the sun.” “ True, madam,” replied the Ambassador ; “ and so they would in *yours*, if they ever saw him.” The hope of catching a glimpse of him on the day of Brag’s adventure at the “ Duke of Marlborough ” was but faint and remote : the storm pattered against the casements of the humble apartment which he and his associate occupied, and Jack was resolved to show that his spirits, however mercurial, were not altogether dependant upon the weather.

“ Blessing, good temper,” said Brag,—“ eh ? —makes no difference to me—life is not long enough to be sorry ; clouds or sunshine, on I go, smack, smooth ’cross the country, and no mistake.—As I was saying just now, if I were to write my life and adventures, what a

book it would make ! to be sure, one could not publish it ;—compromise so many dear delicious creatures—eh ? ”

“ But do you find,” said the stranger, “ this facility of conquest equally general in the higher classes, with whom, as you have already said, you mix ? ”

“ Equal,” exclaimed Brag, emptying at the same moment his first glass of Stubbs’s punch, —“ the same everywhere. I grant you, the females of the aristocracy are more closely watched ; the eyes of the world are more on them. But, dear me, when they are out of sight—when we are what I call tiled,—all snug and comfortable, and no mistake,—I think the tip-toppers are livelier than the mediums.”

“ And these females, as you call them,” said the stranger, “ are they most easily led away by person or manner, or accomplishments ? ”

“ A little of all,” said Jack, running the dumpy fingers of one of his little fat hands through his curls, and pulling up his shirt-collar with the other as usual ;—“ manner is everything—that’s it, sir ; genteel, but bor-

dering upon the lively — eh, don't you understand? Now there's Lady Fanny Smartly, as nice a horse-woman as you'll see in a summer's day;—why, Lor—just see me lend her my arm to mount! Her brother looks with wonder — the groom retires with awe — and then she gives me a smile, as much as to say, 'You are a sharp little fellow, Jack!' Well, then in the evening, there I find her all gentle and languishing — you wouldn't think she had ever seen a horse in her life; — and then she laughs, — and I look, and then she laughs again; and you can't think how one gets on in that way—eh, and no mistake!"

"Lady Fanny Smartly?" said the stranger;
"I think I have occasionally seen her riding in London."

"Very likely," said Jack; "but that's not the way to know her. Now there's Mrs. Dallington—a friend of mine, and her sister—they live close up by Grosvenor Square;—I go there almost every day; they are as opposite as light from dark,—one all sharp, you know—sort of daisy-cutting tit—smack smooth, and no

mistake ;—the other, Miss Blanche Englefield, all meek, modest, quiet ; what you call retiring, soft, gentle.”

“ A melting beauty ?” said the stranger.

“ No,” said Jack, colouring ; “ not melting ; — a—not that sort of thing, — but — distant, and shy. Why, now with *me*, she is all free and easy. There I see a couple of men day after day dancing attendance upon these two women, and dying to marry them. In course I shouldn’t take any advantage of my friends, as I told Lord Tom—a crack crony of mine — Lord Tom Towzle. I never would — no, I scorn the action, — but it is hard to refrain.”

“ Lord Tom Towzle,” said the stranger, “ is a son of the Duke of Ditchwater, — is he not ?”

“ He is,” said Jack : “ I see you know some of their names. Did you ever see Lord Tom ? I always call him Tommy for shortness ;— he is an excellent fellow in his way,—not over respectable in money matters — but an uncommon good un to go ’cross a country.”

“Have you seen much of his aunt, Lady Bloomville?” said the stranger.

“Oh, the old toad!” said Jack; “a regular scarecrow,—she is what people call a respectable body—eh! reads him lectures and all that—he can’t bear her;—we have a great deal of fun there sometimes—we go and what he calls roast her.”

“I had always heard,” said the stranger, “that she was a remarkably respectable amiable person. I hope you never found *her* so complying as you seem to have found the rest of your fashionable friends.”

“I tell you what,” said Brag, putting his finger to his nose—“if *you* knew what *I* know, you wouldn’t be surprised at anything.”

“She has a brother, hasn’t she?” said the stranger.

“What, Lady Bloomville?” asked Jack.

“Yes,” replied the stranger.

“Oh, yes, Lord Ilfracombe,” said Jack; “and a queer chap he is too.”

“Is he much at Lady Bloomville’s?” asked the stranger.

“More than we like,” replied Brag; “he is what I call a dull dog, — good man in his way, — plain, and no show, — none of what I call gammon. I say, I must have another jorum of this stuff — put your head out and call, will you—eh! make yourself useful — nothing like sociability, and no mistake—eh!”

The stranger obeyed, and called the waiter; Rachel appeared, and Jack ordered a replenishment of punch, in doing which, having previously expressed his admiration of the waitress, he suited the action to the word, and then resumed.

“Old Ilfracombe is a queer one,” said he, “a bore,—won’t sit after dinner. Now, as I say to Lord Tom, that is a fault of the young ones;—no conversation,—no nothing now—up go the ladies, and then comes ‘Will anybody have any more wine, or shall we have coffee?’ and up we go after them,—no opportunity for what somebody calls the feast of reason and the

flow of soul, or, as I read it, 'flow of bowl,' —eh ! ”

“ So then,” said the stranger, “ this Lord Ilfracombe is what may be called a wet blanket ! — he doesn't look like one of the Kill-joys.”

“ Do you think not ? ” said Jack. “ I suppose you have only seen him by chance, at some public dinner, or somewhere where smiles are always ready. If you knew him as well as I and Lord Tom do, you would set him down for as great a bore as ever lived.”

“ And is Lord Tom, as you call him,” said the stranger, “ in love with either of the ladies you have mentioned to me ? ”

“ Not a bit,” said Jack. “ Tommy and I — or rather, I might say, I and Tommy, take a different course, — butterflies, bees,—eh ! — don't you see ? — rove and sip — and no mistake. No, I think it would be an injustice in either of us to marry. But, there are two very respectable men dangling — you understand what I mean.”

“ Perfectly,” said the stranger.

“ But,” said Brag, “ it is painful to see it — eh! — Lord bless your heart — however — Oh! here is my second glass — put it down, Rachel, — here — come round — this way, — don’t be frightened, the gentleman won’t eat you.”

Rachel did as she was bid, but it was quite clear by the expression of her pretty countenance as she left the room, that she did not think quite so much of Brag as Brag thought of himself.”

“ If you,” said Brag, “ had opportunities as I have of seeing the best society, — what I call skimming the cream, you would be in the secret; but without seeing it, as I said before, there’s no believing it — eh!”

“ I am sure you are right,” said the stranger. “ I think Lord Ilfracombe has a son, hasn’t he?”

“ To be sure he has,” said Brag, “ Lord Dawlish, — and a nice chap he is too; he married a Miss Linton, the daughter of a country gentleman in my lord’s neighbourhood. I know all the facts from Lord Tommy. She is

like a doll in a toy-shop window — waxy and winky-eyed—eh! You understand—money—the father sold the child to buy the title, and a pretty swop too. Lord bless you! they live like cat and dog. I can't bear her—mawkish—eh! Don't you take some more of this mixture?"

"Not yet," said the stranger. "And does Lord Dawlish mix much in your sports?"

"Why now," said Jack, "before you carry this on too far, I *do* think you ought to tell me why you ask. I don't think it fair, living with these people as I do, what you call hand-in-glove, and all that, to let out; you may, perhaps, have an interest in knowing particulars. I am sure you won't be offended, but I take it that you are in the mercantile line, and what people in the city call travelling on your own bottom—you want to know where credit may and where it mayn't be given—eh? I don't think I ought to commit my friends, old cocky—eh! all right and no mistake—don't you think so?"

"Certainly," said the stranger; "I didn't know that Lord Dawlish *was* a friend of yours."

“The whole clique,” said Brag, looking very cunning; “and I can tell you this—they *know* I am rich, eh!—all snug, smug, and no mistake.”

“Well,” said the stranger, “I am much obliged for the mixture of confidence in *me*, and the consideration of *them*, which regulates your communications;—but I suppose old Ilfracombe himself is a steady goer?”

“Umph!” said Jack, “pretty well—six o’ one side and half-a-dozen of the other—much of a muchness—you understand, eh!—all outside—plating, as I call it.”

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Stubbs, who announced that Mr. Brag’s groom had just arrived from London, on the top of the coach, which had set him down at the corner of the cross road.

“Let him come in,” said Brag, with an air of the most exalted dignity.

The lad made his appearance, dripping, like Niobe, all tears.

“Well, what made you so late?” said Brag.

“ Couldn’t git down afore, sir,” said the lad.

“ Well,” said his master, “ go get yourself something to eat, and see to the horses.”

“ I wanted to say a word about the horses, sir,—please,” said the lad.

“ Well,” said Brag, “ you may say what you have to say ; you are not afraid of that stranger, I suppose.”

“ No, sir,” said the boy, “ I’m not afraid o’ anybody, but I didn’t know I was to say what I had to say, out.”

“ Say,” said Jack, waving his half-emptied tumbler over his head—“ ‘ Say on,’ as the chap at the theâtre says.”

“ Mr. Figgs,” said the boy, “ wishes to know whether you want both them ’ere horses as is here any longer this week, or if one will do, as he has an opportunity of letting one or both on ’em to gemmen as pays ready money ; and if so be you keeps ’em both, you’ll be pleased to send up the stumpy by to-night’s post.”

“ Ha, ha, ha !” said Brag, his cheeks

turning as white as chalk, his hair seeming to uncurl, and his whole countenance assuming the appearance of a detected pickpocket—"how good!—how deuced good, eh! Ha, ha,—what! my own horses!"

"Not your own horses, sir," said the boy, "they are *his* horses, you know, sir, and—"

"Hold your tongue, sir," said Brag; "I think I ought to know whose horses they are better than he;—get out,—go and look after the nags—before you get anything to eat—and I will come out to you presently."

Of all the curs unhung, there is none so awfully contemptible as a drivelling braggart. The wretched cockney seemed to quail before his associate, whom, as we know, he imagined to be either a rider to some respectable house in the button line, or a small dealer travelling, as he called it, "on his own bottom." He watched the glance of the eye of this man, whom he had before despised and bullied, to see what impression the detection of his miserable assumptions had made upon him; but the stranger, who had his own business to attend to, and

who seemed fully occupied by his own thoughts, evinced no alteration either in look or manner when he heard his contemptible companion exposed by the stable-keeper's menial. Why he was not much affected by this *denouement*, we may perhaps shortly discover.

"What fools servants are!" said Jack, when he *could* speak—stirring up a bit of lemon-peel from the bottom of his glass, and keeping his eyes steadily fixed upon the object and operation during the utterance of his remark.

What the stranger thought of masters, was not to be collected from either his words or his looks.

"Figgs is a fool too," said Brag, when he had rallied; "I wonder what *he* means."

The stranger, who merely recollected the history of his companion's stud, all elaborately detailed, did not by any means exert himself to elucidate the mysteries of the liveryman's stables. He was perfectly satisfied with the affair as it stood, and there an end.

"I believe," said Brag, breaking what appeared a most uncomfortable silence, and which,

as pretenders invariably do, he fancied arose from a conviction in the other gentleman's mind that he was a "humbug,"—"I believe that these fellows try to worry one into buying, by such tricks as these: however, I flatter myself I am pretty well known about London, and if I have any interest with the Master of the horse, not one of Figgs's animals sets foot into the Royal stables,—there I *have* an influence."

The stranger merely looked, and finished his one glass of Stubbs's particular, to Brag's two; which one he had been persuaded to imbibe upon the very just principle of repelling external cold by internal warmth. It was clear that the cockney had been hit hard by the stupidity of his boy, as he called him—who, in fact, was not his; and odd enough to say, however pleased he might have been to escape anything like a cross-examination from his companion, he was rather vexed than not, that the said companion did not appear to take sufficient interest in his proceedings to inquire any farther into particulars.

"The weather does not seem to clear up," said the stranger, walking towards the window; "I am not quite sure what is best to be done."

"As for me," said Brag, "I shall be a fixture for the night, if it holds on so badly."

"I must get home by dinner-time," said the stranger.

"Oh!" said Brag, "then this is not your dinner."

"No," said the stranger. "I believe in point of fact it *is*, but nominally it is not; I have fifteen miles to ride before I get home. I suppose one might on an emergency get a chaise here?"

"Not here," said Brag; "I am always obliged, when I want horses, to send down to the George,—two miles from this;—but that makes no difference, I'll tell my boy to run down if you want them:—are you going towards town?"

"No," said the stranger, and stranger he was in those parts, "my course is *from* London."

"Eh! oh!" said Brag, evidently desirous of finding out his associate's pursuits. "I shall

cobble up here for the night, I think ;—I dare say Rachel will make my tea for me, and I shall be uncommon comfortable, and no mistake. I like the—what do the French call it ?—the ‘despipere in poco,’ or something of that sort, as Lord Tommy says ;— so here I stop. I have nothing to do, no business, no call, no tie, except that unhappy Mrs.—did I tell you her name ?—yes I did,—Mrs. Dallington and her sister Blanche. They must wait—can’t ride through the rain for them, eh !”

At this moment a remarkably neat, well appointed travelling carriage, drawn by four bright bays, preceded by an outrider, and in the rumble of which were two strapping servants, drove up to the door of the small ostelry—the steeds all thorough bred, were foaming and champing the bit, and the party within evidently in high spirits. The halt was called just to wash out the mouths of the horses, which were, as it appeared, making a long stage.

“ I say,” said Brag, “ these are somebodies :—what nags !—did you ever see such a turn out ;—that’s what I call going it—straight up,

right down, and no mistake. Let's just go out and have a look at 'em."

Brag led the way—the stranger implicitly followed; the moment he exhibited his person by the side of the cockney, a shout of surprise and delight echoed from the carriage.

"So, here you are!" cried the youngest of the *parti carré*. "What *have* you been doing here?"

"Doing!" said the stranger; "why you don't expect a man to ride to an archery meeting through a torrent!"

"My dear love," said a lady in the carriage, "are you quite sure you have not got wet?"

"Not the least," said the stranger; "for I took the precaution of halting here, and getting some luncheon in very agreeable society. But, perhaps, you will let *me* in turn inquire why you have taken this road."

"Partly, I believe," said a young man who turned out to be the stranger's son, "by mistake,—the weather was so desperate that the whole affair was a *coup manqué*, and we were glad enough to scramble away as well as we

could ; but, however, you will now come with *us* ; they say it is an ill wind that blows nobody good."

"You may rely upon my housing myself in the carriage," said the stranger, "even at the hazard of crowding you. Harrison, stay behind, and bring home my horse in the course of the evening, and pay my bill here ; don't hurry back, for I rode rather hard in coming."

The ladies seemed delighted at the acquisition which they had made to their party "inside," and the stranger, with his foot on the step of the carriage, took off his hat and made a low bow to Brag, who stood looking on in a state of amaze and wonderment arising from the extraordinary fact, that anybody who really lived in the society of which he was permitted to catch occasional glimpses, could seriously sit down and enjoy mutton chops in a small alehouse, without disclosing his rank or talking of his connexions.

The carriage drove off,—splashed a little of the mud upon Brag's delicate nose, and left, according to the stranger's directions, one

of the servants behind, who upon scanning the figure of the cockney sportsman, turned away from him with an air of dignity which his master had never assumed; and whose remarkably smart leathers and tops were so much better "got up" than Brag's ever were, (although when he wore leathers he always devoted a certain portion of the morning to his own personal care of them,) that the unhappy creature cowered before the menial of the man, whom because he was plainly dressed, and assumed nothing in his manner, he had treated as if he were an inferior.

"I say, sir," said Brag to the man as he was walking towards the stable, "may I ask who the gentleman is, who stepped into that carriage, and has left you to take home his horse?"

"That's *my* lord," said Harrison, so was the man named.

"And what lord may he be?" said Brag.

"Don't you know *my* lord, sir?" said Harrison; "I thought everybody knew him,—Lord Ilfracombe. That's my Lady, and his son Lord

Dawlish, and Lady Dawlish, and Lady Bloomville, in the carriage."

"Indeed! five insides!" said Brag: "and who was the young lady with the veil?"

"Lady Fanny Smartly," said the man, and passed on to look after his lord's horse.

Jack stood as if petrified: he felt his ears tingle, his knees shake,—the mingled impudence and folly of his conduct came full upon him, like a double-headed shot. Here were all his intimate friends whom he had never seen before, conjured up, as it were, to ruin him in the estimation of the head of the family, whom he had denounced to himself as a queer one, a bore, a kill-joy, and a wet blanket. He had not the power to stir, nor would he have moved from the place where he stood, with his eyes swimming and his head whirling, if the stable-boy from Figgs's had not just begged him to make up his mind as to the horse he would keep.

Jack, for a minute roused to a sense of his absurdity, gave his answer, and retired to the house; where having in due time recovered the

spirits or callousness which generally upheld him, he rang for some tea,—a beverage in which the subjects of Cockaigne delight, and which was in the course of half-an-hour brought him by a dirty red-headed boy; Rachel Stubbs having gone over to her aunt's, on purpose to get out of the way of his nasty impertinences.

CHAPTER III.

BRAG'S feelings at the period of this announcement were by no means of the most agreeable character. It was quite certain that the scene which had just been enacted by the noble lord and himself would furnish materials for a *historiette* in his lordship's circle, whence it would infallibly descend to the sphere of his own actions, as fashions gradually sink from the duchess to the dowdy, until, as extremes meet, they become extinct from their universality.

Then, for the Lothario to be slighted — avoided — cut by the waiting-girl of a small inn, who ought to have been prouder than a peacock at having attracted his eyes : altogether Jack was ill at ease, and fell to ruminating upon his present not brilliant prospects, until he fell asleep.

Not so his mother. She had pondered the words her son had spoken : she felt that his recommendation to take unto herself a second husband, although she had passed several years of widowhood, was not altogether unreasonable, since the career which he appeared determined to pursue, let it terminate as it might, was not very likely to end in a steady settle-down to business, and since, as everybody allows, a “ lone woman ” in trade is liable to be imposed upon.

It is odd enough, that an idea once formed in a mind where it never had place before, becomes the leading subject of thought and consideration. Mrs. Brag had never dreamt of a second marriage ; and it is but fair to say, that none of her male, middle-aged, marrying acquaintance had ever, by word or deed, led her to moot the question. It was reserved for her son to fire the train ; and from the moment it was ignited, Mrs. Brag became a different woman. She bestowed extra care upon her frill and her front ; had the one plaited, and the other curled, with peculiar pains ; took to the

wearing of coloured ribands; looked into the shop whenever she heard the sound of voices; and, in short, gave herself more airs than she had ever thought of assuming for many years before.

Never, however, had she been driven into what may be called a resolution upon the subject, until the morning upon which this little history opens. Johnny had often suggested the measure, and she had at first repelled the idea, out of respect to the departed Mr. B.; at last, she listened more complacently; then, as I have just said, she occupied herself in putting the scheme in execution practically; and after that morning, finding that all solicitations to John in regard of steadiness must prove fruitless, she came to a resolution of obliging her darling boy, of whom she might justly have said —

“ Johnny, with all thy faults, I love thee still,”

and of making herself more comfortable at home. How to compass the affair then became her only consideration; for the reader ought to know, that although to the very last she

maintained her profession of disinclination for the step, she had, in fact, determined upon taking it. The way she went to work will hereafter be developed.

The volatile John, himself, arose on the morning of his intended steeple-chase, little refreshed from the sort of feverish night's rest he had enjoyed — if enjoyment it might be called. He could not rally from the effects of his self-exposure, which affected him the more strongly, as he began to anticipate (since it was evident that they were staying somewhere in the neighbourhood) the appearance of some of the branches of the noble family of Ilfracombe to witness what men of desperate expedients consider "fine sport." What should he do if this very Lord Dawlish were to join the field, attended perhaps by Lady Fanny Smartly, or the earl himself? Every word that he had uttered the previous night would, of course, be repeated; and if not actually kicked or horse-whipped by the indignant viscount, in revenge for the description he had given of his father and his family, even Lord Tom Towzle himself,

who was his main-stay, might join in the general execration of the pretender; the more especially as Lord Tom had at various times borrowed sundry sums of Brag's "loose cash," and, having been of late refused unlimited access to his purse, might perhaps not be particularly sorry to find a cause for breaking off his acquaintance with him.

The day however came, and Brag having breakfasted, began to rally; and resolving to put the best face upon the affair, he mounted the horse he kept, and proceeded to the scene of action, casting his eyes, it must be admitted, in every direction, in dread of encountering his friend of the preceding afternoon. Nothing of the sort, however, occurred to annihilate him; and when he reached the inn at which the sportsmen were to rendezvous, and found Lord Tom and his associates just the same as usual,—all gay, lively, and warm in their reception,—he felt reassured, and in less than an hour had forgotten, or resolved not to remember, anything about his self-exposure to the noble lord.

The steeple-chase took place according to

notice; and at its conclusion Lord Tom, assisted by Brag, furnished a report of it for the "Sporting Intelligence" of the London papers, in the following words:—

"This event came off yesterday to the entire gratification of the numerous company who were present.

"The course had been marked out on the previous day by Lord Wagley, Lord Thomas Towzle, and Mr. Brag, who judiciously selected a stiff line of country, including thirty-four leaps and three brooks, best calculated to try the mettle of both horses and riders. The winning-post was between two flags placed in a field belonging to Mr. Brag, who was also appointed umpire. Five horses started—

" Mr. Tagrag's ' Washball ' . . .	<i>Owner.</i>
Capt. Snobb's ' Beggarboy ' . . .	<i>Owner.</i>
Sir Frederick Flapper's ' Stumpy ' .	<i>Mr. Martingale.</i>
Mr. Smith's ' Tommy ' . . .	<i>Owner.</i>
Colonel Ball's ' Blunderbuss ' . .	<i>Mr. Flint.</i>

"They all went off at a slashing pace. 'Tommy' refused the second leap, and threw his

rider over his head, and, falling backwards over the bank, broke his back, and died in a few minutes. 'Washball' was also unlucky in trying to jump a brook, which her rider did not know was fordable twenty yards lower down: she slipped her shoulder, and was obliged to be shot immediately after the race. We are sorry to add, that Mr. Tagrag, who rode her, unfortunately pitched upon the back of his neck, and severely injured his spine. He lies at the 'Full Moon' at Wigglesford, without hopes of recovery.

"After these little mishaps, the play was made entirely by 'Beggarboy' and 'Stumpy,' 'Blunderbuss' having knocked up after the first two miles and a half, and being run to a dead stand in the middle of a ploughed field, whence neither flogging nor spurring could move him: in fact, the shine was taken out of him, and it became a clear case of 'no go.'

"'Beggarboy' and 'Stumpy' had had enough of it; and when they reached the last fence, entered the winning-field nearly neck-and-neck. 'Stumpy' tumbled into the ditch, and

Captain Snobbs worked 'Beggarboy' through the flags in very fine style. 'Stumpy' was considerably damaged by the last fall, which is a pity, inasmuch as he is about one of the best horses in this part of the country.

"The race was for ten sovereigns each, and was run in an incredibly short space of time. The numerous company assembled were highly delighted with the spirit-stirring sport, and, after the chase, proceeded to a field at the back of the 'Full Moon,' to see the ties shot off of the great pigeon match between Mr. Slack and Mr. Nibbs, for a silver jug and cover.

"The name of Nibbs in itself was sufficient to create an unusual interest, and the ground was crowded with amateurs. The terms were, twenty-one yards at twenty-one birds—charge limited to two ounces. Betting, three to one the winner killed eighteen—five to four on Nibbs. They both went in, sure of doing the trick; but after Slack and Nibbs had each killed twelve birds, Nibbs had it all his own way, and won the jug by five birds, killing nineteen to Slack's fourteen; thus winning the

by-bets of three to one. Several other matches came off, and about a hundred and fifty pigeons were knocked over.

“ Nothing could exceed the gaiety of the scene. The weather was remarkably fine, and a proportion of the beauties who had honoured the race with their presence, were witnesses of the cheering sport. An old woman standing just outside the enclosure, received a whole charge of shot in her face, which is likely to cost her the sight of one eye at least; and a silly boy, who imprudently attempted to knock down one of the winged birds which was falling out of bounds, was badly wounded in the chest and throat. He was immediately attended to by the surgeon of the place, who extracted thirty-six shots from different parts of his person, and he was then forwarded in an easy cart to the county hospital. We hope these accidents will act as cautions to other equally inconsiderate individuals.

“ At the conclusion of the sports an admirable cold collation was served up at the ‘ Full Moon,’ in Bunks’s best style. The evening

passed off in the most delightfully convivial manner, and arrangements were made for a renewal of the exhilarating diversion of the day, on Thursday next, when a still more numerous assemblage is anticipated."

This animated description, as a matter of course, figured in the principal journals of the following morning, Brag having succeeded in the interpolation of three or four words, conveying to himself a field, and, by implication, a much more extensive estate, in a part of the country where he did not possess even so much as called him master at his "little place in Surrey." The only drawback to his happiness, however, upon this occasion, was a visit, three days after the appearance of the intelligence, from the farmer to whom the field actually did belong, who gave him to understand that he had directed his attorney to prosecute the trespassers, who without his permission had ploughed up his land at a season when it did not require tillage; and having ascertained by the newspapers that the whole arrangements had devolved upon Mr. Brag, the attorney thought it

most advisable to pounce upon *him* in the first instance.

This visit, and the intelligence his visitor conveyed to him, were anything but agreeable to the little man, whose feelings upon the matter were in no degree tranquillized by the conviction that his difficulties and responsibility were fastened upon him, because he could not refrain from the indulgence of his besetting propensity, in making himself not only the hero of the affair, but the owner of the ground over which it had been decided.

The next race, however, which Mr. Brag was destined to run, was away from the lawyer, and accordingly, with prudence, which in animals unclothed, we designate instinct, but which in cases like that of Johnny we by courtesy call reason, our hero quitted his head quarters at the Duke's Head, and proceeded to town per stage-coach; the second message from Mr. Figgs, with regard to the horses, having been accompanied with a peremptory demand that they might both be sent back.

Brag returned to town considerably damaged,

and however bold he might be in assuming consequence, and claiming friendships, never did human being more clearly evince by his personal appearance the workings of what served him for mind, than he ; a blow like that which he had just received from the farmer's announcement completely upset him, and in five minutes the sprightly, pert, impudent-looking wagling was metamorphosed into a pale, downcast, miserable victim ; and in a plight thus indicative of defeat, he reached the metropolis, quite undecided how to dispose of himself for the afternoon.

While he is in this state of suspense let us look for one moment at those over whose destinies he almost unconsciously possessed a most extraordinary influence. Sir Charles Lydiard, whose sensitiveness had once been disturbed, and whose shyness had been excited by Rush-ton's observations upon the manner in which Brag was received at Mrs. Dallington's, could not get rid of the impression which he had at first so hesitatingly received. None who have not felt jealousy—and, since there never can be

love without it, who has not?—can imagine the pains which a patient once infected with the disease, the jaundice of the mind, incessantly takes to keep up its virulence. It so happened, that Sir Charles had never seen Brag since his conversation with Rushton, and therefore had no opportunity of watching the “telegraph” of which they had upon that occasion spoken; but upon a reference to all that *had* passed, he managed to combine a thousand “trifles light as air,” an infinity of nothings, the consideration of which produced an increased exhibition of coldness and reserve during his next two or three calls at the widow’s.

Mrs. Dallington saw this accession of frigidity, and without exactly hitting upon its true cause, did certainly “telegraph” Blanche into an observance of it. This new glance gave new grounds for doubts and apprehensions, and the worthy baronet passed four miserable hours in the boudoir of the woman he best loved in the world, if he had but known it, devoutly wishing to make his escape, but fearing to move lest an *éclaircissement* should take place.

Sir Charles felt more embarrassed from the fact that he had *not* seen his aversion during his last one or two visits ; and because he was extremely anxious to know the cause of an absence on his part longer than usual ; and because, above all, he could not induce himself to make the smallest inquiry after him. Other men called, joined in the conversation, and relieved Sir Charles from the restraint under which the dread of a serious explanation kept him whenever the temporary absence of Blanche reduced the circle to a *tête-à-tête* ; but the appearance of none of those worried or annoyed him. Mrs. Dallington's manner, kind to all, was in no degree particular to any one of them ; but certainly, now that Rushton had concurred with him in his views upon the subject, he *did* think that Brag was very differently treated by both ladies. Still, he could not descend to touch upon the topic ; and after a feverish sitting on the third morning after Brag's departure, Sir Charles left the widow's to dress for dinner, pleading an engagement which he had not, for declining an invitation from her

and her sister to dine with them, which he would have been, if he could have commanded his feelings, too happy to accept.

Rushton, who had been there, but was also absent in the evening, became more actively employed in Brag's business than his cold and calculating colleague. In passing Grosvenor Street he encountered Brag proceeding to visit his door-plate and inquire for letters, just arrived from the Duke of Marlborough, having been let out of the coach (in the inside of which he travelled to avoid the farmer's lawyer) at the corner of a back street in the Edgeware Road, so as not to be detected in his descent; by which ingenious device, and the exhibition of a whip in his hand and a pair of spurs on his heels, the pretender let it be inferred that he had ridden up to town upon one of the nine horses, which did not belong to him.

Rushton welcomed his *friend* to London; and anxious to ascertain, if he could, whether he proposed making an evening visit to Mrs. Dallington's, joined him in his walk down the street.

“ Just returned ?” said Rushton.

“ This minute dismounted,” said Brag ; “ capital sport ;—never better !—all smack smooth, and no mistake. Killed two horses outright, and one man, I fancy ; however, he was well picked up, and the doctor has got him in charge.”

“ Much company ?” said Rushton.

“ Lots of people,” answered Brag, who, unable to repress that which was certainly true, however dangerous the allusion to the family might be elsewhere ; “ I myself did not stay at Wigglesford, I had rooms at the inn where my horses stand. All quiet, snug ; no nonsense ;—civil people ; good landlord ; pretty daughter, eh !—you understand—no mistake !”

“ Were you alone, then ?” said Rushton.

“ Not altogether,” said Brag ; “ old Ilfracomb dined with me. He was going to an archery-meeting to join his family. Weather turned out bad ; took part of my little dinner ;—humble fare—mere soup, fish, cutlet and capon. The rest of the party joined us after

dinner. Dawlish and his wife, and Lady Sarah Smartly—they did not get out of the carriage—so I packed him off, and returned to finish my claret, and wind up the evening in *my* way, eh?”

“Are you going to the widow’s this evening?” said Rushton.

“Not certain,” said Brag: “I’m rather tired, and more than half engaged. How is Sir Charles? Cold chap, that, eh? Don’t you think so?”

“Why,” said Rushton, “a trifle upsets him. He is the most delicate-minded man I ever met with: an expression, a word, a look affects him in a way one could scarcely imagine.”

“Proud, eh?” said Brag. “Distant, eh?”

“No,” replied Rushton. “There is a coldness in his manner, I admit; and those who do not know him may fancy this proceeds from *hauteur*; but the fact is, that however much he may warm in the course of the evening, he falls back to his original state of chilliness the next morning, and requires a new process to *degêler*

him. He is not therefore popular, but, in truth, his apparent coldness has its origin in diffidence and a distrust of himself."

"Oh! that's diffidence, is it?" said Brag. "I can't say I quite understand *that*: I thought it was pride—but for *that*, in course I don't care one farthing, and no mistake."

It all at once struck Rushton (Sir Charles having naturally, although unexpectedly, become the subject of their conversation) that the present would be a favourable opportunity of sounding (the water not being very deep) the views and intentions of his communicative friend.

"Why," said he, "to tell you the truth, Brag, I do not think *you* a fair judge of Sir Charles. I have my quarrels with him upon different shades of feeling; but you—*you* are totally different."

"I don't see that," said Brag. "It's all one to me, you know. I don't care a fig, as I say to Lord Tom: take me as I am, eh!—all right up, straight down, no mis-

take. I quite agree with you in differing with *him*; but I don't see how *my* case differs from *yours*."

"Ah!" said Rushton, "there it is: it is in that difference all the difference lies."

"How d'ye mean?" said Brag.

"He is afraid of you," replied his companion.

"Afraid of *me*!" said Brag, pulling up his shirt collar, "that's too good."

"You are too civil by half to the widow," said Rushton.

"Me!"

"Yes," said Rushton, "and what is even more to the purpose, he thinks she is too civil by half to you."

"Upon your honour!" said Brag, in an ecstasy of delight — "afraid of *me*! Come, come — eh! — that's too good!"

"Not a bit too good," said Rushton. "I tell you what it is—I'll be candid with you—I am just as much afraid of you myself."

"You, Rushton!" said Brag.

"Yes, more than Sir Charles is," replied

Rushton. "Recollect now—remember—think how you go on with Blanch Englefield—a being all shyness and reserve with everybody else, is with *you*, animated and evidently interested in your conversation."

"You don't mean that *you* are afraid of *me*, too," said Brag, fully convinced of the entire seriousness of the conversation, which after all contained more of real apprehension than Rushton would have willingly had him know. "I certainly have a way, eh!—I don't know what it is—it cannot be person—manner, I suppose. I am always ready to talk, eh! The tongue is the very deuce in a sharp fellow's head—a little repartee, and all that, eh!—small-talk, and a good deal of it—that's it."

"Clearly," said Rushton.

"The women like little parties," said Brag—"fêtes—water excursions—*dejeuners*, and all that. Then they get so good-humoured; and the champagne—and the return—and the moonlight—and the music, and all *that*."

"You have not yet opened your battery in that line," said Rushton.

“Waiting for weather,” said Brag. “I’ll show you the way to do that sort of thing as soon as summer is well in, eh! — and then, I think, you *will* have the heart-ache.”

“Are you, then, so general a lover?” said Rushton. “Will neither content your love of conquest? Must you win both?”

“Oh! come,” said Brag, putting his finger to his nose, and winking, “you are playing your tricks—what do *they* care for *me*?”

“That remains to be seen,” said Rushton. “My firm belief is, that you may obtain the hand of either of them; and my opinion, moreover, is, that if you have not serious intentions that way, as far as one of them is concerned, you do an injustice to both, by acting towards them as you do.”

“Upon your life!” said Jack — “you are serious?”

“Perfectly,” said Rushton; “however, this is entirely between ourselves: and whatever step you take, let me just mention, that the widow is much the more lively companion of the two, and has rather the better fortune; so

turn your basilisk eyes towards her, and leave the poor silent, sighing Blanche for me. Adieu ! Here we are at your door — you are at home. Do me the favour to remember what I have said, and as you are great be merciful.”

Saying which, Rushton quitted his friend, who was completely upset by the announcement of the opinion he had just heard delivered. It took very little to convince him of his power over what he called the “female sex,” and he had certainly for some time felt very much inclined to coincide with Rushton in his views upon this particular point. But then came the question—Which of the prizes should he take?—which of the lovers should he immolate? Lydiard, he was assured, was too cold and odd to charm the widow, and Rushton too violent and jealous to be agreeable as a husband to Blanche. The notion once put into his head, operated there like that with which he had a short time before possessed his respectable mother on a similar subject, and all that now remained for him to do was to make up his mind for a decision. That he *did* decide, the reader

is destined soon to see ; how, for the present, must remain a secret.

There certainly is one part of the affair which did not make itself evident to him. Blinded by his vanity, he did not perceive that the whole object Rushton had in view in acknowledging his own fears, which he really fancied had some foundation, and in encouraging his pretensions, was the expulsion of the little man altogether ; for although he had succeeded in awakening Sir Charles's suspicions, and Sir Charles had been equally fortunate in arousing *his*, and that he had moreover discovered, by Brag's manner and admission, that the widow was, at least of the two, the present object of his admiration, he felt perfectly satisfied that he would receive his *congée* the very hour in which he made a formal declaration, and thus, without appearing in the business, he should be relieved from all farther apprehensions from his presence, while the affair of his expulsion would, in fact, be that of Lydiard and the widow.

Brag, however, was about to be entangled in another little business, which promised to inter-

fere with the immediate execution of his plan. He had resolved upon repairing to his "little place in Surrey," in order to look after certain affairs which were essential to the production of the means for "carrying on the war," and afterwards proposed, at least when it should be sufficiently dark for the purpose—to visit his mother, who, wisely enough, took care of the shop as far as her abilities would permit her to watch one or two clerks and shopmen, who undoubtedly, seeing that she was a "lone woman," did every day that, of which, in her own phrase, she was so much afraid "put upon her;" which phrase, rendered into plain English, means, cheat her out of her property whenever they were able.

As our story expands, it may be necessary here to observe, that Mrs. Brag had a daughter, the sister of John, who had never been a favourite with her father. People said her temper was bad: some people said one thing, and other people, as they will do, said other things: certain it is, that home was no home for her. And after a sort of half-and-half education at a sub-

urban boarding-school, where she learned astronomy, the mathematics, netting, knitting, knotting, the use of the globes, dancing, geometry, drawing, embroidery, rug-working, purse-making, flower-painting, botany, singing, geology, plain needle-work, natural history, stencilling, Italian, French, Spanish, and German, the harp, guitar, piano-forte, tambourine, and triangle, together with many other sciences and accomplishments, "too numerous for the brief space of an advertisement," she early in life married hastily, and clandestinely, a gentleman in the army of the name of Brown. His military duties had since called him to India, where his regiment had now been for several years. Of him or his sister, Jack seldom spoke, and, when he did, coldly referred to her husband as the major. Any little uneasiness which her father had evinced about the marriage at the period at which it occurred, had been decently buried in oblivion by the fond mother and her son, who, whatever other feelings might have prompted him to this acquiescence in the affair, it could not be doubted was in a considerable degree

acted upon by a desire to say nothing whatever about it.

There was, however, a person for whom, in earlier life, and before the doting fondness of his sire had spoiled him, he did feel as deep an interest as such a mind as his was capable of — this was no other than the major's sister, Miss Brown — Anne christened, but called familiarly in those times Nancy Brown. It does not sound romantic by way of a name, but what *is* in a name?

At the time of Brag's acquaintance with her, she was a lovely girl just eighteen, fair as the lily and fresh as the rose. Her mother was an humble personage, no better, let it be understood, than a dress-maker, to whom this daughter was assistant; for, lest we should ourselves fall into the errors of which Brag was guilty, it may be as well to observe, that the military functionary with whom Kitty became enamoured, and who had the honour of leading her to the Hymeneal altar without her father's consent, derived his rank of major from Brag himself; in giving him

which brevet he felt himself probably justified, inasmuch as it was derived from a mere abbreviation of his real title. Brown was serjeant-major in the regiment to which he belonged; but the omission of one half of his official denomination was adopted very early by Jack, with, it must be confessed, the full acquiescence of his father, who never could think of the misbehaviour of Kitty in making such a match, with common patience.

When his father died, Johnny, as will be seen hereafter, became so fine a gentleman, that he never paid the least further attention either to Nancy Brown or the promises he had so earnestly made her; judge, then, the surprise and mortification which overwhelmed the vain and foolish creature when his mother, after the usual greetings upon his arrival at home, placed in his hands a letter from his poor suffering victim.

To describe the face or the feelings of Brag when this appeal from his once dear Anne was handed to him by his respected parent, (who was not entirely aware of the real state of the

case, but believed the communication, in all probability, to have some reference to her daughter, whom she in her heart had, with a mother's feelings, forgiven,) would be impossible. To come from a question of supplanting Sir Charles Lydiard in the good graces of Mrs. Dallington, to a letter from Nancy Brown of Walworth, was indeed a sinking in the sublime. He turned pale, as usual; then flushed; then his lips quivered, and his eyes opened; and then, without saying one syllable, he thrust the paper unopened into his pocket, where it shall remain until a new chapter gives us space for its perusal.

CHAPTER IV.

THE letter which Jack, having hastily glanced at the superscription, thrust out of sight, follows.

“Walworth, Tuesday.

“DEAR JOHN,

“I hope you will not be angry with me for writing to-day. You remember what day it is? I think I need not remind you that it is your poor Anne’s birthday. For three or four years after Katharine’s marriage with George, and their departure for the Indies, you used to write to *me* on this day, but you afterwards left off doing so ; and I should not perhaps have broken in upon you now if the anniversary had been as bright and as cheering as it once used to be. No, my dear John, ‘hope deferred maketh the heart sick ;’ and although I have by this time

learned to give up all expectation of your fulfilling your promises made to me before your father's death, I neither have forgotten my affection for *you*, nor mean to upbraid you with your forgetfulness of *me*.

“When we were so much together, and when you said you could be happy with nobody else, and told me of your dread of your father's anger, which he had indeed shown by never seeing poor Katharine after her marriage with my brother George, you led me to believe that the old gentleman's objections were the only obstacles in the way of our marriage. I lived on—not in hopes of his death, for I could not be so wicked as to hope for that—but I lived on, certain that, when it should please Providence to take him, you would fulfil your promise and redeem your pledge. He died, John, but you came not to me, wrote not to me. Day after day I watched; listened to every knock at the door, fancying it might be you; and every time I saw the postman coming towards our lodging, my heart beat because I thought he might bring me a letter from you.

“A year passed away, and then, as you know, I wrote to you, rather because I had heard from George and your sister, and wished you to have news of them, which I knew you could not otherwise get, than to worry you with my own importunities. You answered *that* letter, but you came not yourself, neither did the letter which you wrote contain one kind word, or one allusion to other days, now past and gone. Yet I complained not. I heard of you in gay parties and gay places; I sighed to think how far we were parted, and perhaps I cried, John: but you were happy and prosperous, and doing well in the world; and I could only blame myself for having, when a girl, been so foolish as to fancy that you cared for me enough to make me your wife.

“Six years and two months this very day was the first time we met, and God knows, although I have felt sorrow and sadness enough since, it seems to me as if it were but yesterday. It was to oblige and serve your sister Katharine, who was my friend, that I walked out with her, when she used to meet George. I

did not see any harm in their courtship: I thought well of my brother; I knew he was kind and good; his officers gave him the highest character for steadiness, activity, honour, and integrity; he loved *her*, and she loved *him*. I ought, perhaps, to have known, that he was not what is called a suitable match for Katharine; but girls of seventeen, especially upon such matters, do not always calculate. I am sure I did not, or I would not have helped her to take a step which was to make her parents so angry.

“It was the same blindness in my own case that permitted me to listen to your professions. I am not ashamed to own, John, that I loved you fondly; nor am I ashamed to tell you, although perhaps you will not believe me, that the impressions made *then* remain as strong as ever. I have not seen you here for more now than three years. Perhaps it is for the best. I *did* see you once, now about four months since, riding with another gentleman; it was in the Kent Road. I thought you saw *me*, but I am sure I must have been mistaken.

“What I now write about, cuts me to the

soul! *My* fate is sealed! and never shall a murmur of mine for myself cause you a moment's uneasiness. The folly was mine: I alone will suffer! — But there *is* another to whom — I scarce can hold my pen to write the words — to whom, by the strongest ties of nature, and the sacred word of God, I am bound. I could not beg of a stranger; my heart would burst before I could confess my wretchedness; — to *you*, John, I *can* speak. My poor mother is, I fear, dying. She has been confined to her bed for several days, and I have nobody to watch over her but myself. Her illness has prevented her working, and my constant attendance upon her, has hindered me from doing anything myself. Do not be angry with me, John; what I ask, is not for myself. She shall bless you for your care of her, and be grateful for any little aid you may afford her. When she recovers, she and I will struggle to repay you.

“ If you required any proof of my unshaken regard, you might find it in this request. As I have told you, time and reflection have taught

me the folly of my ever considering you more than a friend,—it is in the character of a dear friend that I ask this favour for the best of parents.

“ I have put the address to this letter, which is the same as the one which was to my last ; but I thought, perhaps, you might have destroyed it and forgotten the direction. We have not heard from George for more than two years, which makes my poor mother very sad ; but we have been told that his regiment is coming home. You who are so much in the world could find out in a minute, I know : even if you did not care about George, you must be anxious to hear of Katharine, whom you fondly loved, and who I know loved you with equal affection.

“ I will not take up more of your time. Let me have one line, to say you have received this. I shall count the minutes till I get your answer, which may at all events assure me that you are not angry with me. God bless you, John — dear John ! and assure yourself of the affectionate friendship of

“ Yours,

ANNE BROWN.

“ You will see by the seal of this, how your present to me was valued, and how it has been treasured. Adieu.”

This was the letter which Mr. John Brag thrust into his coat pocket in his mother's presence, and which in five minutes afterwards was as hastily withdrawn from it and thrown into the fire unopened and unread. “ John,” as poor Anne called him, knew the writing, and with the low cunning of a vulgar mind, fancied he could justly anticipate the contents of an appeal from an amiable woman whom he had deluded and betrayed, leaving her no consolation in her desertion but that which she could not fail to derive from the support of religion and the consciousness of her own unspotted virtue.

Yes, Anne, the humble unpretending Anne, was still the gentle, modest creature he had found her. Her mind was, perhaps, not so very highly cultivated as others in the world, nor were her accomplishments so numerous, but she was a woman; and kindness, duty, devotion, and disinterestedness were blended in the

composition of her character. Mr. John Brag would probably have described her in different terms, had he ever permitted himself to speak of her, and perhaps would have affected to pity the "poor creature," while he laughed at her fondness and credulity. Mr. John Brag was a great talker, and everybody knows what that is. The nature and extent of his feelings and regard for the once loved of his earlier days may easily be ascertained, by the way in which he treated her appeal. He stood and looked at the flames as they scorched and finally consumed the paper, and quitted the room perfectly satisfied with his firmness and philosophy, thinking, as it appeared, with Lord Monteagle's anonymous friend, that "the danger was past as soon as he had burned the letter."

The writing this letter to one whom she yet believed in heart devoted to her, although withheld from making her his wife by considerations first instilled into his mind by his late father, and, for all she knew, kept alive by his surviving parent, cost poor Anne a severe struggle. When it was despatched, it became

the sole object of her consideration from morning till night. The doubt whether she had done wrong,—whether John would think ill of her, or fancy her mercenary or presuming,—whether he would receive it as she hoped, and come perhaps himself, bearing the relief she sought for her poor mother,—whether he would make a point of taking it to her on the day upon which the application reached him, the day upon one anniversary of which he had given her the very seal with which she had sealed it,—whether it might awaken feelings which she was sure he possessed, but which, for the reasons we have just stated, had been suffered to lie dormant,—and whether —— !

But vain were all her hopes—groundless all her fears,—by one rude blow the bond between them had been eternally severed ; and while the poor anxious Anne was pondering these things in her mind, Mr. John Brag was dining at the Ship Tavern at Greenwich, with a party of uncommonly fine fellows, who, in spite of those leviathans of the deep, the steam-ships, which agitate the surface of the once silver

Thames into a sort of metropolitan sea, had pulled down from Whitehall in their accustomed blue shirts, to partake of the fare for which, as well as its hospital, Greenwich is so famous.

Day passed after day, and, as the reader may easily anticipate, Anne and her application remained unnoticed. In *her* mind this silence was associated with some calamity which must have befallen John, and this apprehension added to her other griefs and anxiety ; meanwhile, her mother's illness increased, and, almost without the common necessities of life, Anne was at all hazards forced to call in medical assistance.

She had here again a difficult, a delicate task to perform, but it was a duty, a filial duty ; and who can doubt that the well-regulated mind of this now humble girl was soon made up as to the course she was to pursue ? The reader may have noticed the expression, "*now* humble," it is meant that he should notice it, because, humble as was and had been the position of the mother and her two children, they had been born to better things. Anne's father was the son of a Bristol merchant who had

amassed considerable property, to which his son succeeded. He married early, and, contrary to the advice of his friends, left his native city to enter upon a new field of speculation in London.

Those who remember the wonderful prospects held out in the year 1825, and who perhaps are even yet suffering from the effects of their vast and sudden destruction, may anticipate the termination of Mr. Brown's career at an earlier period. Those who at the present moment are assailed on every side by the most plausible professions and the most tempting offers of fortunes incalculable, by an embarkation in the variously diverging abominations called rail-roads, and who fancy a dividend is at hand before a spade has been struck in the ground, which it is proposed to disfigure and destroy for the lucre of gain, had better take warning by it.—For some two or three years Mr. Brown occupied a handsome house, his table was open to his numerous mercantile friends, and, in those days, everything that Mr. Brown possessed was of the best, everything he did was of the wisest. The war which the triumph of Waterloo so gloriously

closed, was, at the time of Mr. Brown's prosperity, raging fiercely; every foreign port was closed by an embargo; the market was safely shut against the importation of an article in general demand, of which he held a considerable quantity. The fine and liberal notion struck him of buying up at all hazards and all prices this desirable commodity:—he did so,—and, although as a young beginner in London not much known, he had agents all over the Empire, who were employed by him to keep incessantly purchasing, until warehouse after warehouse was stored with it, and he became nearly the only holder in the kingdom. Thus, having long before expended all his capital in the pursuit, he proposed to regulate the market with the turn of his finger. The price advanced, he still held; it advanced yet more; and he began to doubt whether he had screwed it up to a pitch sufficiently high to answer his purpose, and make him a *millionaire*; when, one fine morning, an order in council suddenly and unexpectedly opened the long-closed ports, and the next week beheld, Mr. Brown an irretrievably ruined bankrupt.

In the pursuit of his infatuating speculation his engagements had become incalculably enormous, and the consequent securities unbounded. The shock of such a reverse was too much for such a mind, and in the midst of recklessness, remorse, and despair, he consummated all his other madresses by suicide.

In the hour of distress, it was shown that no provision had been made for his widow and two children. His connexions at Bristol were few, and those, greatly offended at his quitting his native city, did not feel at all disposed to relieve his relict, whom, however unjustly, they thought proper, conveniently enough in order to save their own pence, to denounce as the first cause of his increased rate of living, to support which he had had recourse to extraordinary means of gain; and when all was done that *could* be done, an annuity of forty pounds a year was secured for her, by a subscription amongst a few of her husband's friends in London.

The fall was sudden, dreadful; at that period her son George was about eighteen, Anne about twelve. George had received a fair edu-

cation at a school at Clapton or Hackney, I now forget which, and was a fine handsome grown young man. Anne was almost too young to appreciate the full extent of her misfortune, and her affectionate disposition led her thus early to devote all her care to her surviving parent, to whom the change in their circumstances and station, to her almost unaccountable, only endeared her the more.

George was old enough to know the whole truth, and to feel the bitterness of repulse when his mother tried to procure him a mercantile situation in the city, and being of a bold and resolute character, he left his home without any communication with either his mother or sister, and enlisted in an infantry regiment, then in Ireland. It was not until his scheme had been irrevocably completed, that he imparted the truth to his parent, and then returning to receive her blessing, departed for the Emerald Isle with a sort of negative concurrence on her part, obtained by the expression of his determination upon the point, and an avowal that, if he even could obtain footing

in any merchant's counting-house, he felt assured that his disposition and feelings would not permit him to continue in it.

George's removal from her care and charge, however much she lamented the separation, of course relieved the widow from considerable expense; and the little Anne was not yet of an age to require much outlay; for her mother, who had been cruelly misrepresented by her late husband's connexions as being the cause and origin of his follies, was of a most domestic turn of mind, and sufficiently accomplished to instruct her daughter in as much of ornamental education as it was probable she ever would require.

Still it was evident that the annuity which was secured to her would not be sufficient to support them without additions derivable from some other source; and thus it was that she formed the resolution of retiring to one of the villages near town, and turning the minor accomplishments which she possessed, to account, in order to increase her income. This she did, and, under the blessing of Providence, suc-

cessfully. Undisturbed by the inquiries of any of the friends of her prosperity, but encouraged by the respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood in which she had fixed her humble abode, she obtained by the sale of numerous fancy articles of her own making, and by even humbler employments, a sufficient income to render *her* happy, inasmuch as it secured the society of her beloved daughter. In Bristol and its neighbourhood the name of Brown, common as it is, might from circumstances have attracted the unpleasant curiosity of some, and entailed upon her the equally disagreeable commiseration or condemnation—coming hand in hand, perhaps—of others ; but in the neighbourhood of London few people, out of his own immediate circle, knew the victim of ill-fated ambition, and all that was said of Mrs. Brown in the village in which she located herself was, that she was a remarkably nice civil lady-like person, and had evidently been born much above the station she then filled.

It was about two years after George's departure from the home he had scarcely inhabited,

that the acquaintance between Katharine Brag and Nancy Brown commenced. It originated in the fact that Mrs. Brown, anxious that her child should improve herself upon certain points of education beyond those to which she might herself be competent to lead her, or rather, if the truth were told, finding that more regularity and restraint were necessary to settle the habits and fix the attention of her child, than were likely to be observed or enforced at home, resolved on sending her as a day scholar to Lavender Lodge, the "Seminary for young Ladies," at which Miss Brag was—in all probability as a set-off for soap and candles—being polished up to perfection—this special favour being granted to the widow on account of her exemplary conduct, and the universal respect in which she was held.

With the girls at Lavender Lodge, little Anne soon became an amazing favourite and a general pet. The very circumstance of her returning home to dinner, and quitting her companions after school hours, gave her a sort of distinction, and made her, as it were, the me-

dium of intelligence, and even of communication, by which contraband luxuries were sometimes smuggled in, and what are technically called "slip-letters," from the bigger girls to their friends, were smuggled out of the seminary. By these acts of kindness, the impropriety of which Nancy was then not old enough perfectly to comprehend, she was quite the fashion, and the boarders were unanimous in treating her with kindness and affection.

Amongst her greatest friends was Katharine Brag, who was more than ordinarily good-natured to her, and during the three years Miss Brag remained at school before she was pronounced everything that heart could wish, Anne had grown up to be more than sixteen years of age — and had so far gained the confidence of the head of the establishment, that it seemed more than probable she might eventually become a permanent assistant in its duties. Circumstances, however, occurred to put an end to this probability; for a lady who had taken considerable interest in Mrs. Brown's success, made a proposal to her to establish herself in the vil-

lage of Walworth, near London, where she was certain she could ensure her support and patronage in the sale of her various works, as well as in the art and mystery of dress-making, which the industrious mother had studied, and now practised, to maintain herself and her child. This offer, superadded to the desire of Anne herself to contribute her share of labour to their joint maintenance, decided their removal.

This change of habitation tended rather to confirm the friendship of Miss Brag for her friend; for it was effected just about the period at which that young lady finally quitted school. The amiable manners of Anne again became her passport into the society of the elder Brags; and although she was received as the humble companion of the young lady, she was so genteel and so clever that they thought (much strengthened in their opinions by that of their daughter) that it was greatly to her advantage to have such a companion.

In the midst of this happy communion, and just as John Brag had begun to look at Anne with eyes not quite indifferent, her brother

George arrived at home on leave of absence from his regiment, previous to its departure for India. He was then a fine handsome young man, of two or three and twenty. The military drillings he had undergone had set him up, and his figure was just what a figure ought to be. The career he had run since he entered the army had been honourable and satisfactory. The notice of his officers had very early after his enlistment been attracted to the attention, regularity, and assiduity with which he performed all his military duties; and a rumour having soon got about that he was something better than he seemed to be, he was taken notice of by the captain of his company, who, after inquiries, not further pushed than he felt consistent with delicacy, and the evident desire of the young man himself for a certain degree of concealment, suggested him as a fit occupant of the office of paymaster's clerk, for which it was evident he was fully qualified:—he was speedily raised to be a corporal, and before his first four years of service were expired, had be-

come serjeant-major of his regiment, a circumstance perhaps unparalleled in the British service.

In one of those moments which decide the fate of empires and of ladies, Katharine Brag met George Brown; it took but one glance of his bright eyes to scorch her susceptible heart, and unfortunately or fortunately, as the case may be, George Brown reciprocated the feeling. It was no difficult matter to get Anne to agree to Katharine's avowal, that she had never seen so charming a person,—an officer too,—the thing of all others; for the immediate rank of the young hero “in mufti” was never explicitly defined; and while she was contriving all sorts of devices to enjoy his society in the participation of the various amusements of middling life, her brother John, who had become great friends with George for the sake of his sister, fell into all their arrangements with the greatest readiness; so that every day in which they could manage it, little parties were made for Exhibitions, Panoramas, and all the Vauxhalls, Lyceums, Playhouses, and places

of public resort, where either during the performance or after it was over, they might so satisfactorily pair off, as to leave themselves counterchanged in couples, to the unqualified delights of that sort of honeyed conversation, to which it is as impossible to do justice in the repetition, as it is barbarous to interrupt in its progress.

After the play, as George was with her, Anne would stop to supper with the old Brags; and then, as John Brag was fond of exercise, he would see George and his sister home to Walworth after supper was over; and so they went on, until John was desperately in love with Anne, and Katharine resolved upon marrying George.

Katharine believed that she had great influence over her father, and, from what Anne had told her of her origin, never imagined but that she should procure his consent to her marriage with George,—an affair which “pressed,” inasmuch as his leave would be out in about three weeks, and away he must march with his regiment. So Katharine, one fine afternoon,

just gently touched upon the subject of Mr. Brown's good qualities, in a *tête-à-tête* with her papa, and led the conversation into a channel which she thought very likely to extort an opinion from the old gentleman. She was right;—she succeeded in her speculation, and heard, to her infinite horror and amazement, that he would see a daughter of his dead at his feet before she should marry what he called a "Soger."

And then forthwith "flared up" the anger of the venerable Brag, who, though a really plain straightforward man, and as free from pride or affectation as any wax and tallow chandler within the bills of mortality, became absolutely furious at the notion of this dress-maker and her brother,—people admitted only just to please his daughter's fancy,—presuming and daring, and all *that*: which fury ended in a positive prohibition of any further intercourse between the parties; a mandate for which was accordingly issued, sanctioned of course by Mrs. Brag, who however, in yielding her accordance to the decree, could not help thinking

that Anne and her brother were as nice a couple of people as ever she had seen in all her born days.

It was at this juncture that the friendship of Anne for Katharine Brag and her affection for George were called into action. It was then she contrived meetings for them, to which Kate came escorted by John, and George accompanied by herself. Up to this period these had been matters of course; but when old Brag shut his doors against the Browns, and handed his daughter over to the care and surveillance of her brother John, it became another sort of affair, and as John was too happy to bask in Nancy's smiles, he gladly squired his love-sick sister to their appointments; and thus matters went on for a fortnight or so, when Kitty Brag ran away with the young Sergeant, who, having as well as his bride attained the years of discretion, procured a licence and became man and wife,—a fact which came to the knowledge of the respectable parents of the bride by her non-appearance at breakfast, and a return of "*non est inventa*" made to a sort of warrant sent after her into

her bed-room, whence she had decamped very early indeed in the morning.

From that morning neither Brag the elder nor Mrs. Brag had ever seen their child up to the period of the commencement of my narrative ; Mr. Brag, as we know, had been gathered to his fathers ; and George and his wife were still in India.

After the wedding and flight the proscribed Anne used to see John, who contrived, unknown to the old people, to visit her and her mother as usual. This acquaintance was for some time continued as the reader may have already discovered ; its happy termination being only delayed, as Brag had himself said, until the death of his father should leave him free to act for himself. Meanwhile the said father having then but one object left upon which to lavish all his paternal affection, gave his son counsel and promises which led him to aspire, and, as he said, "look up," and so Johnny by degrees became less ardent and infinitely more civil towards Miss Brown, until by those gentle gradations of coolness which fond and anxious hearts can only

justly estimate, she saw him seldom, and heard from him rarely. His father's death occurred, —Brag immediately took a higher flight, and having furbished himself up by dint of private lessons and evening tuition, was ready, when he came into possession of the business, to abandon the course which his blinded parent had pursued, to enable him to cut a figure, and became the thing which the reader has already seen him to be.

The intelligence which Mrs. Brown had from time to time received of George was extremely satisfactory ; he had been specially noticed by Major Mopes, (the military secretary of Sir Cadwallader Adamthwaite, the commander-in-chief at the presidency,) who had, upon the recommendation of the paymaster of the regiment, whose clerk he had been, appointed him to a similar situation in his office ; a step which George, who was full of ambition, wrote home to say he hoped might lead to better things.

What they might be, Mrs. Brown of Walworth did not exactly understand ; however, he appeared happy, spoke affectionately of his

wife, and looked forward to the next ten or fifteen years as likely to bring him home again. To Anne, a prospective view of ten or fifteen years was but a sad one; the loss of Katharine had been to her severe and trying, and every month, and every year grew sadder, until at last the only consolation left which she derived from George's letters, was lost, and at the time she wrote the appeal to John, with which the chapter begins, she had not, as she says, heard from him for more than two years.

Then it was that real sorrow and bitterness of heart came over her,—her mother's illness, her brother's silence, her lover's falsehood, her own destitution,—it was a dreadful combination of evils, against which she had to bear up. One other blow was only wanting to overwhelm her,—and it fell.

There *are* moments when the most serious calamities affect us less than matters which to the million may appear of no moment or importance whatever; a look, a frown, a smile, nothing in themselves, have, when the mind is

wrought up to a certain pitch of excitement, a power more dreadful than the gravest evils of another day.

I have already said that, after waiting for an answer to the letter she wrote to "John,"—on her birth-day, — sealed with his seal, — and moistened with her tears — (the letter he destroyed unread),—she felt the absolute necessity of overcoming all scruples, and conquering all repugnance to what might be considered the solicitation of charity in favour of her mother; and accordingly she set forth from their humble dwelling, leaving her sinking parent in the care of a temporary nurse, to call upon a well-known professional man in the neighbourhood of Burlington Gardens, of whom she had often heard the lady who first induced them to take up their abode in Walworth (but who now was herself dead)—speak in the highest terms. Anne had indeed seen him at that lady's house, and felt that that circumstance gave her something like confidence to make an appeal to him on behalf

of her sick mother, which she would not have felt with regard to a perfect stranger.

Behold then this fair, fond, and affectionate daughter on her way—trembling and doubting, as she hurried along the crowded streets,—her eyes cast down or heedlessly wandering, while her thoughts are all concentrated on the pillow on which her dying mother's aching head was laid; a prayer to Heaven resting on her lips, and hope, strengthened and sanctified by the silent appeal, glowing in her heart. Just as she reaches the neighbourhood of the worthy man who is to minister worldly relief to her parent's afflictions, her way is intercepted,—there is a crowd—a stoppage,—she is rudely pressed upon,—stared at, by an unmeaning insolent countenance belonging to a tall, tiger-looking, smoke-dried dandy, upon whose arm is leaning a short, smart, vulgar-genteel companion. The tall fellow continues his gaze for a moment; the short fellow, emulating this impertinence, and anxious to behold the beauty who has attracted his friend's attention, pro-

ceeds to the manual experiment of pinching her arm. The suffering wanderer turns indignantly to repel the insult, and sees before her, grinning and grimacing, like a baboon, that paragon of pretension, Mr. John Brag.

At such a moment such a sight was, indeed, a trial;—but if it struck daggers into her heart thus to be treated by *him*, who once, and in other days, had vowed his vow of love and faith to her, what must she have felt, when, upon beholding her pallid agitated countenance, she saw the fellow wink at his companion, and heard him exclaim with the peculiar elegance of the school to which he aspired to belong, “Ho, ho,—come along, my lord—no go—this *is* a mistake,”—and clutching his tall friend’s arm, hurry on, shrugging up his shoulders in a sort of mock despair, and no doubt giving his own version of the nature of the previous acquaintance which had evidently subsisted between himself and the supposed stranger !

Anne stood still for a moment—had she tried to move forward, she would have fallen ; — her breath faltered — the blood seemed to ebb and flow in her heart—her eyes swam with tears ;— she was better, — she continued her way, and reached the physician's door, — it was opened to her, and she was shown into a parlour where those who came under similar circumstances were accustomed to wait : — there it was that her feelings had way, — she scarcely had entered, before floods of tears poured down her pale cheeks, and they who had come for advice and assistance themselves, were eager and active in her service. As soon as intelligence of the circumstance had been conveyed to the master of the house, he made his appearance in the apartment, and seeing the extent of poor Anne's agitation, caused her to be removed into another room, where every attention was paid her which the exigency of her case required.

Her agitation, however, appeared to increase, and the moment she was sufficiently recovered to attempt to explain herself, she relapsed into a state so painful and alarming, that the ex-

cellent man, satisfied by the circumstances that she was labouring under some excitement, any attempt to soothe which, upon the instant would be perfectly vain and useless, placed her in the care of his housekeeper, (for whom he despatched a servant,) with directions to keep the young lady perfectly quiet, and endeavour to soothe and calm her mind until he should return, after having seen those patients who were in the habit, at stated hours, of calling upon *him* at his own house.

And while all this was going on, Mr. John Brag and his friend Lord Tom Towzle, who, as the reader perhaps has anticipated, was his companion upon the occasion, and whom although he “Tommied” him and “Towzled” him in his absence, he “my lorded” in his presence to an immeasurable extent of vulgarity, not merely to toady the stripling but to be overheard by the passing crowd—were, as I suspected, engaged in an elaborate detail of Jack’s foregone adventures with Anne, which, as Lord Tom did not care whether Brag were hanged or not, so as he rode his horse “Slap-bang”

to win on the following Thursday, he might just as well have saved himself the trouble of repeating.

Upon what small things great things turn, say ten thousand writers, — so is it proved by this adventure of Mr. Brag's. Worlds would not have convinced Anne Brown of his falsehood and heartlessness, had this event not occurred; they were now proclaimed — established, — practically established. His first assault might have been mere rudeness, — not likely to endear him to one who fancied him devoted to her; but when the discovery *had been* made, and he saw whom he had outraged, to conduct himself as he had done, was enough to decide the question. Thus it is that we learn more in an hour from a lecture illustrated by experiments, than we can collect from written treatises or printed instructions in a year. The art, or science, whatever it may be, is embodied, — you have it before you, — and the very facility with which the professor performs his operations, makes the spectator himself a proficient.

So was it with Anne: — she had seen what no book could have taught her, she had witnessed *that* which no other evidence would have induced her to believe. The blow was severe, but perhaps it was providential.

CHAPTER V.

HAVING safely housed our unhappy girl in the house of the worthy physician, we may perhaps be permitted to cast our eyes towards the gay widow and her sensitive sister, who, truth to be told, were suffering as much in *their* way as our more humble friend from Walworth.

Mrs. Dallington, whose perception was remarkably clear, and whose judgment was particularly sound, had for some time been fully aware of the state of Sir Charles Lydiard's heart and mind—for his mind and his heart were waging a perpetual war with each other; nor, however solicitous she might be (I admit that supposition merely for argument's sake) to bring their acquaintance to a happy termination, did she entirely regret the caution and consi-

deration with which, it was so evident, the fastidious baronet bent his steps towards the hymeneal altar. She felt assured that, if he judged her rightly and fairly, she should eventually possess his entire affection ; and she also felt, that to obtain it after such a scrutiny, would be to secure it for the rest of her life.

It must be allowed that she sometimes thought he had considered and examined and scrutinized quite long enough, and believed that the time had arrived when she should have an opportunity of saying yea or nay, as the case might be ; but, whenever the crisis seemed at hand, some new doubt, some new apprehension, appeared to be conjured up, the bright vision was dissipated, and she remained still the expecting, disappointed Mrs. Dallington.

Blanche, on the other hand, received a proposal from Rushton almost every day in the week—if at least the most violent protestations of love and devotion might be so construed ; but the *brusquerie* of his character evinced itself so

perpetually, that the chances were, that the evening of the brightest day ended in a storm. Blanche was quite aware of the disposition she had to deal with ; and although flurried and fluttered by her lover's extraordinary animation and vivacity, she resolved not to surrender her hand, whatever might be the fate of her heart, until she was convinced that her hero was calmed into a fit state for domestication. In point of fact, Rushton was quite as jealous of Blanche as Lydiard was of her sister ; but his jealousy was of a different caste : he smiled, frowned, laughed, scolded, and did ten thousand unaccountable things, just as he was acted upon by passing events, while Lydiard never suffered himself to be betrayed into any external evidence of what occupied his mind : and thus the pair of lovers continued to make themselves as uncomfortable as they made those, whom upon all essential points were devotedly their own.

Affairs were in this delicate position when Brag, who was encouraged in all his absurdities by his noble friend Lord Tom, partly to

gratify his vanity, and so secure his aid, if required, upon emergencies, and partly to afford sport to his lordship's friends, opened his heart in a kind of hypothetical way to the young lord with regard to the widow and her sister, to which train of thought he had been led by the conversation he had previously had with Rushton in the street.

"I don't see," said Jack, "why — I — shouldn't do as well as my neighbours, in the matrimonial line. I look on, at others who play at courting with wonder ; they seem to me to make no move. Now there's Sir Charles Lydiard and the widow—they don't care a fig for each other, and yet they are to be married, as the world says. As for Blanche, she seems to me to care as little for Rushton. Why, hang it ! if I wanted to marry either of them, it would not be a week's work. No, no !—faint heart—eh ! you know. I'd just make either of them buckle to, in half the time, and no mistake."

"Have you ever thought of such a thing, Jack ?" said Lord Tom, who, piqued by the coldness with which the widow had always

received him, felt by no means ill-disposed to encourage his tiger in any scheme likely to make a commotion in the family.

“Why,” said Jack, “I can’t say that I have; but I—of course, I dare say it means no more than what I always meet with—but I *have* thought that there was something uncommon odd about the widow’s eyes.”

“Indeed!” said Lord Tom,—“and very handsome eyes they are too: besides, Jack, she is rich, and what they call in the city ‘well to do.’”

“Mum!” said Jack—“know her fortune to a fraction: didn’t overlook that in the calculation.”

“Oh!” said his lordship—“then you *have* been thinking rather seriously upon the subject.”

“Not seriously,” replied the tiger, “only I was considering that Sir Charles is what I call losing time—waiting upon her too long, as we should say at Epsom. It would be a good match,—not that I care for money—no more than my father did. Did I ever tell you of my governor and his hundred-pound note?”

"Not that I recollect," said his lordship, although he did.

"Why, *my* father," said Jack, "was one day walking along the Strand, when, just as he came by the end of Buckingham Street, a fellow picked his pocket of his pocket-book, full of memorandums, letters, and other papers, "of no use but to the owner," and a hundred pound note besides. What d'ye think he did, as soon as he found out his loss?"

"Went to Bow Street, perhaps," said Lord Tom.

"No."

"Stepped to the Bank and stopped it."

"Couldn't—didn't know the number."

"Caught the thief, then."

"No," said Jack, "not a bit of it. The minute he found he had lost it, he went home and got another."

"In order to have it stolen like the former," said Lord Tom.

"Not a bit of it," replied Jack; "just to show how little he cared about money. So with *me*; I don't care for money, except as it buys mo-

ney's worth. What's a guinea in a box?—not better than a brass button in a bag. But still one cannot marry without the stumpy."

"Then try the widow," said Lord Tom; "you have my full permission—only don't quote me as authority. You will drive Sir Charles either into a proposal or the Serpentine river; so at all events something will come of it."

"But, my lord," said Jack, "since we *have* touched upon this matter, I will be candid. I have just said I don't value money; but, if it weren't for the fortune, I would rather marry the sister."

"And has *she* been kind too," said Lord Tom.

"Why," said Jack, simpering, and affecting to look modest, "I can't say kind—uncommon goodnatured—and—laughs—and all that: and I have heard a long-headed old fellow, who knows the sex, say, that if you can once make a grave female laugh, the day is your own."

"Provided always," said his lordship, "that she laughs *with* and not *at* you; the difference is surprisingly great."

“ Oh ! Blanche is no ways whatsoever satirical,” said the tallow chandler : — “ and, hang me ! if I was asked, I should say there wasn’t a pin to choose between them.”

“ Take my advice, Jack,” said the mischievous lordling—“ try them both. Manage your matters well—lead them both on —there is no chance of their confiding in each other, because as they are both supposed to be engaged, neither would choose to trust the other with any proof of her infidelity.”

“ Shall I write to the widow,” said Jack, “ and talk to the sister ”—

“ Write, man ! are you mad ? ” said Lord Tom. “ Never write—that *would* be a pretty affair. Who knows how notes may miscarry—how writing-desks may be left open, or if not, be broken open ? Besides, they might, upon so strange a proceeding as that, compare notes, and what a pretty mess you would be in then ! No ; sound them—try them—get them apart, and ascertain the extent of their interest in you.”

Brag listened to all this advice of his noble friend, believing it to be given *de bonne foi* ; and

although there appeared difficulties in the delicate process which his lordship suggested, and which, by a mind like Brag's, were not perfectly easy to be surmounted, he thought he comprehended the general tenor of his instructions, which had for its object his making himself uncommonly agreeable to both parties.

“Lead Blanche on,” said Lord Tom, “by a course of negative officiousness; be always near her, devoted and unaffected. Let her fall into friendship; sympathize with her in all her feelings, agree in all her opinions—but never seem to do so with any defined object: thus in a fortnight or three weeks you will obtain her confidence. She will be convinced you esteem her and value her, and are anxious for her comfort and happiness; then she'll grow kind and familiar, and, thrown off her guard by your respectful behaviour, will begin to evince an undisguised wish for your society. She will at last feel that you are somehow, she can scarcely tell how, essential to her happiness, and when you have got her into this blessed state of amiability, off with your disguise of friendship, like the hero

of a tragedy, and profess yourself her lover. Then"—

"Ay, ay," interrupted Jack, "that's all very well, my dear lord, and a very pretty month's amusement it would be, to do all you prescribe: but, then, what will Frank Rushton be about to let me? He's as fiery as a dragon, and as jealous as old Nick. No, no, whatever is done, must be done clean, off-hand, smack smooth, and no mistake."

"Then," said Lord Tom, "if that's your principle, you had better take a shot at the widow; she's not so likely to be flurried by a hurry; and, besides, your activity will form such a striking contrast to the respectable icicle now hanging about her, that you will in all probability carry the day by a *coup de main*."

"Just after my own heart," said Jack; "by Job! I'll have a shy at her."

"Do," said his lordship, "and when you are installed in the town-house and family mansion in the west or north, or wherever it is, make yourself agreeable; fill your house with your friends, and let us be jolly."

“ We ’ll live like fighting cocks,” said Jack, “ you only just see. I ’ll do it regular ; there sha ’nt be a fellow in the king ’s dominions who shall beat me.”

“ Success attend you, Jack !” said his lordship,” but don’t forget Thursday.”

“ I ’ll be punctual to the minute,” said Jack ; my watch is a regular-built chronometer. You shall find me at the starting-post, all right, and no mistake.”

And so the friends parted, Brag having not the slightest intention of ever risking a second visit to Wrigglesford, or a second attempt to trespass on the surly farmer’s grounds, who had threatened him for his former proceeding ; and moreover being resolved to devote the next few days to the achievement of one of the beauties, of both of whom he was convinced, in his small mind, he was a regularly established favourite.

Meanwhile we must not forget poor Anne Brown, whom we left under the care of the physician’s housekeeper, and who, when she recovered from the agitation which kept her

senseless for some hours, found herself with her head reclining upon the arm of that highly respectable functionary.

It would require a much greater space than I am permitted in this hasty narrative, to describe the excellent qualities of Dr. Mead, the eminent and able practitioner to whom the anxious daughter had prevailed upon herself to apply for advice and assistance; but it is absolutely necessary that the reader should be made acquainted to a certain extent with the attributes of his character, even beyond the pale of his profession, the exercise of which seemed rather the fruit of a desire to do good to others, than of any venal feeling of self-aggrandizement.

Although there exists no documentary evidence to prove his descent from the eminent physician of the same name, it seems not entirely improbable that the fortuitous circumstance of a similarity of patronymic and profession might have conduced almost unconsciously to a similarity of feeling and disposition between them. Matthew Mead, the father of the famous

doctor, was a nonconforming divine : our Dr. Mead's father was an orthodox clergyman. If the famous Mead married early, our Mead was yet single ; and whatever turn he might have had for the fine arts, or whatever veneration he entertained for their professors, his means, although fully adequate to the maintenance of a highly respectable establishment and equipage, were not yet sufficiently extensive to emulate his namesake as a patron or protector. Still, his income might have been much larger, had he not upon every occasion where, by a benevolent curiosity, he discovered the slenderness of a patient's means, forborne to accept the fees which from the rich and great he did not hesitate to accept, and which his spreading fame and rising reputation produced in very considerable numbers.

In his manners mild and soothing, in his conversation unaffected and intelligent, his study appeared to be to "minister to the mind diseased," as well as to the body ; and his approach to the sick chamber was hailed by the watchful invalid rather as a relief from pain

and suffering in itself, than as the mere business visit of a professional man, coming in the ordinary routine of duty to enquire and prescribe.

With feelings and a disposition like this, the benevolence of his heart beaming in his countenance, and the sympathy which he felt for sorrow and sadness expressed in language the most gentle and in a tone the most harmonious, it is not surprising that Dr. Mead should have speedily reassured poor Anne, to whom, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered to be conscious of her situation, he was summoned by the housekeeper, and whom he was greatly surprised, upon inquiry, to find not a patient, but merely the emissary from one who sought his advice.

It was in a moment evident to his searching eye, that the agitation under which she had been suffering, and from which she was not yet quite recovered, must have had its origin in some more sudden event, and one of more recent occurrence than the illness of her mother: he resolved to question her upon the point; but a recurrence of all the worst sym-

ptoms induced him to forego any further search into a matter, in fact, disconnected with the object of her visit to his house.

That object was immediately attained. The excellent man ordered his carriage to be got ready instantly, and directed the housekeeper, who had been in attendance on Anne, to accompany her to her mother's house, and to return home with the carriage, telling her that he would himself, having called upon one or two patients in his immediate neighbourhood on foot, proceed to visit his new patient at a later hour ; giving as a reason for this proceeding the absolute necessity of his seeing those persons before his departure for Walworth, and the probable anxiety of Mrs. Brown for the safety of her daughter, if she should delay her return until he should be able to accompany her.

To some practitioners, this delicacy on the part of our doctor might appear somewhat too refined, the obvious mode of proceeding being, to have handed the young lady into the carriage, and driven with her to her mother's residence ; but Mead felt otherwise. He had odd

notions upon many points; and beyond what he considered the main object of this arrangement, the fact, that an entirely unexpected visit from a stranger might not altogether suit the convenience of an establishment so confined as that of Mrs. Brown's, did not slip his regard or consideration.

When Anne reached home, she had a hard part to play. The anxiety she felt for her mother; the pang she received when she saw the sunken eye of her beloved parent fixed—not tearless—on her returned child, filled with a half-sanguine, half-hopeless expression, and heard her breathing heavily, made her heart ache to its very centre. Filled with gratitude to their expected benefactor, she endeavoured to explain to her suffering mother the extent of his kindness and consideration, while the recollection of the callous barbarity of the man she had once loved, and whom she believed to have loved *her*, wrung her to the very soul.

That she was indignant at the treatment she had experienced, who shall doubt?—but who, that knows woman, will doubt either that in the

heart where Love has once dwelt, the very memory of his presence there, will extenuate the fault which should make the object hateful.

This generous, gentle feeling turned all the force of the indignation which ought to have been directed against the paltry pretender himself, towards his associates, to whose baleful influence Anne entirely attributed the astounding change which had taken place in his manners. Even the neglect of her letter was laid to the same account ; but yet what made the wound he had inflicted rankle the more, was the impossibility at the present juncture of risking her mother's tranquillity—perhaps existence, by telling her what had occurred, or of accounting for her lengthened absence by explaining the cause of the indisposition to which it was attributable.

In less than two hours after Anne's return the doctor, true to his promise, arrived. It is scarcely possible to describe her feelings as he entered the room where her mother lay ; it seemed as if Hope had revived in her breast—that there was somebody who felt an interest for them. She drew back from the bed-side,

and hid her face in her hands to conceal her emotion : she cried like a child, and tears again were a relief to her aching heart.

The kind doctor's questions to Mrs. Brown were few : the case needed little enquiry—it was a sinking of nature, caused, as it seemed to him, less by bodily ills than mental affliction, and considerably accelerated by the want of proper air, and, he almost feared, nourishment. He wrote a prescription, rather however as a matter of form, satisfactory to the patient, than with any view of the success of medicine, and then, having taken leave of his patient, beckoned Anne to follow him from the apartment.

“ Your mother must be removed as soon as she can bear the fatigue,” said the doctor. “ Change of air and diet are absolutely necessary.”

Anne heard the fiat in silence, and again tears rolled down her cheeks.

“ I should think,” continued Dr. Mead, “ that with care and a proper regimen the removal might be effected in four or five days.”

Still Anne remained silent and trembling, her eyes cast down upon the ground.

“ You should contrive to amuse her mind,” said the doctor ; “ she should not refuse to see her friends.”

“ God help us !” sobbed Anne, unable longer to conceal her agitation,—“ we have no friends ! What is to be done, Heaven knows ! She must be moved ; your kind directions shall be obeyed, sir ;—I” —

“ My dear young lady,” said Mead, “ you wrong yourself, and *me*, when you say you have no friends. In *me* you have a friend. Rely on Providence, and never despair : — friends will always be raised up for confiding piety, for suffering virtue, and for filial duty in distress. I will not indelicately press my enquiries, but you must permit me to act upon my own advice. *I* am the friend your mother must admit. I will call here to-morrow ; and I think, without putting either of you to much inconvenience, I can secure you a comfortable residence in a worthy and respectable family, in a desirable climate. *I* must manage all this ; and

perhaps I may be able, at no distant period, to give you and your mother a good reason why she need not feel herself under any serious obligation to me :—upon this point I will not trouble you to-day, — you have had worry and agitation enough. Keep yourself calm and quiet ; cheer your mother's hopes — there is no fear of a dangerous result ; upon that point I will stake my reputation. Let her have the medicine I have written for, and to-morrow, by one, I shall see you again."

Saying which, he shook hands with the grateful Anne, and proceeded to his carriage.

At no period of our lives does kindness so powerfully affect us as when it comes immediately after we have received some cruel blow. The affectionate tone and spirit of the doctor's consolatory address struck to Anne's heart, and she returned to her mother, blessing God who had raised up such a help to them in the hour of gloom and adversity.

The doctor's benevolence did not stop here, even for the day. In the evening, whilst Anne was preparing the best refreshment she could

contrive to procure with but slender means of purchase and small skill in cookery, the house-keeper of the excellent doctor arrived, bringing with her, sundry little delicacies, and some wine which her master "had taken the liberty of sending, because by experience he knew its soundness and excellence of quality, and was therefore sure it would be serviceable to his patient in her particular case;" in short, every comfort was secured to her that sympathy could suggest or art provide; and, as Anne herself said, the very feelings which such attentions inspired, contributed of themselves materially to exhilarate and revive her poor mother, whose bodily ailments, as Mead had surmised, were painfully aggravated by mental depression.

And yet, grateful to Providence as Anne was, with a heart overflowing with thankfulness to the generous, noble-minded man who in a few hours had converted a house of mourning into a house of hope, if not of happiness,—when she laid her head upon the pillow near her mother, who slept tranquilly, her first thoughts were of that unworthy being by whom

she had been first insulted and then repudiated even as a common acquaintance, in the street that morning.

It seemed like a dream to her even then. Prepared as she must have been, and indeed had told him she was, eternally to resign any claim of a tender nature upon his heart, she could not bear the thought of being spurned by the man for whom she had permitted herself not only to feel, but admit that she felt, an affection. That she had not deserved such usage was self-evident, and that she should receive it particularly after her last appeal, was galling and distracting beyond endurance. Little did she think how perfectly disconnected with that appeal his conduct was, or suspect how he had treated her last letter.

These thoughts, and those of early days, were naturally blended in her mind with the memory of her brother George, whose long silence was another source of anxiety and agitation; nor could she forget, besides the tenderer ties to John, the closeness of their connexion by George's marriage. If George had

been at home, thought Anne, he would not have behaved so — but George too has forgotten us. All those who once were dear to us, and we to them, are gone! and we are helped and comforted by the stranger upon whom we have no claim, and who has no tie to us but his own benevolence.

In the morning, Mrs. Brown awoke after a refreshing sleep, very much better than even her watchful daughter could have hoped. It was but too evident that the physician had rightly decided on the character of her complaint, and the absolute necessity of a change of regimen in the first instance, to be followed up by a removal from the close atmosphere of a small room in a gas-lighted suburban village to a purer air. Indeed, so very much better did her mother appear, that Anne repeated to her the verbal prescription of the doctor, adding the proposal he had made of providing them with a comfortable residence in a family known to himself.

For three days did Dr. Mead continue his visits punctually, bringing with him upon each

occasion some little luxury prepared for use, under the plea that he was most anxious his patient's food should be dressed according to rule, and that he could not be satisfied unless his own servants were the operators, under his own immediate direction. At the expiration of a week he pronounced her capable of bearing the fatigue of removal ; and on the following Saturday evening Mrs. Brown and her daughter found themselves established in a delightful cottage surrounded by gardens and fields, within four miles of town, the master and mistress of which appeared the devoted servants of the worthy doctor, and vied with each other in showing attention and courtesy to their new inmates.

With returning health, there arose in Mrs. Brown's mind an irresistible feeling of embarrassment connected with her present situation. She found herself and her daughter placed in a position of ease and comfort, with the consciousness hanging over her that she was incapable of affording the luxuries which she was enjoying, and a sensitive unwillingness either to trespass upon the kindness of their benefactor,

or if that kindness were merely limited to the recommendation of their new residence, equally anxious not to involve herself in expenses which she was aware that she could not defray.

The doctor's hours of visiting his patient were different from those which he had fixed before their removal. He came in the evenings, partook of their tea, and sat longer and stayed later each evening that he came—and so a week wore away — and yet Mrs. Brown had not the courage to put those questions which she had resolved somehow to ask, and to which her medical friend's conduct certainly did not appear likely to afford any practical solution ; for when he congratulated her upon the improvement of her health, he alluded to a trial of some new medicine, about the effects of which upon her constitution he was very sanguine, and which he should begin with, in “ a week or two.”

The words had scarce passed his lips, when the eyes of mother and daughter met, not unseen by the doctor, who immediately added to what he had already said : — “ Perhaps you

may be of opinion that in that time you will have no need of any medicine at all."

This seemed to be an occasion which Mrs. Brown might seize, of coming to an explanation of her feelings, and she availed herself of it accordingly; and, difficult as was the task to perform, she contrived to make the doctor understand the delicacy of her position, and the apprehensions under which she laboured.

"My dear madam," said Mead, "I am delighted that you have given me an opportunity of speaking upon this matter. As the worthy people of this house can tell you, or may perhaps have told you, you are not the first patient I have recommended to their care; and that when such an event happens, I consider them my guests during their residence here. In *your* case, however, there are circumstances very different from those which occur in many others, as far as I am concerned:—you have, naturally enough, forgotten *me*; but we have met before the occasion upon which I recently visited you."

“ Indeed !” said the lady, somewhat incredulously.

“ Indeed,” replied the physician, “ I have dined in your house, madam, more than once. I was not aware of this fact when first I called on you, but circumstances and coincidences led me to institute an enquiry, and I found in *you*, madam, the widow of the man to whom I may, without exaggeration, attribute my success in life, and the place I now hold in society and my profession.”

“ You surprise me exceedingly,” said Mrs. Brown.

“ It is now more than four-and-twenty years since,” said Dr. Mead, “ that I was recommended to the notice of Mr. Brown by a friend of his and a connexion of mine, then living at Bristol ; and upon my arrival in London I was, in consequence of that introduction, invited to your house, where, as I have already said, I dined more than once. But it was not by mere commonplace hospitality that Mr. Brown proved the warmth and sincerity of his feelings towards me. Upon one occasion, when an op-

portunity presented itself — in all human probability the deciding opportunity of my life for furthering my professional views — a sum of money was necessary to the accomplishment of my wishes, of which I was not possessed. Had not Mr. Brown at that time generously assisted me, I must have relinquished the object I had in view, the realization of which, proved, as I have already said, the foundation of my fortunes. I have now, I think, said sufficient to overcome all your scruples with regard to my present conduct ; and I only rejoice that the opportunity is afforded me of proving to you and this dear young lady, that there is still in the world such a sentiment as Gratitude.”

“This is most extraordinary !” said Anne.

“For several years,” continued Dr. Mead, “after my return from the Continent, I endeavoured to find out the widow of my benefactor, but without success, and I look upon that as one of the most fortunate hours of my life in which the suffering daughter of my first friend came to require my assistance, at-

tracted to me by a reputation which her father had so materially contributed to establish. Now," added he, "you may look on me with feelings far different from those which have hitherto occupied your hearts and minds:—in me you see only the *protégé* endeavouring as much as in his power lies, to evince his thankfulness where it is so justly due."

"What are we to say to you?" said the agitated parent.

"Nothing, nothing," interrupted Mead. "Permit me to continue my visits, now, luckily not rendered professionally necessary. Let me entreat you to remain where you are, and allow me, whenever I can, to come hither and enjoy in your society, and that of your exemplary daughter, a repose after the hurries and worries of a London life, which I have long but vainly sought."

Nobody can doubt what, under the circumstances, was the course Mrs. Brown pursued, although, it must be confessed, that she even then, had her doubts as to the truth of the doctor's narrative; regarding the statement of his

obligations to her husband, and his consequent success in life, rather as the fruits of an inventive faculty, exerted in order to overcome her scruples and satisfy her delicacy, than as a matter-of-fact bit of history.

Of herself, she had not the slightest recollection of the name of her new old friend in the catalogue of visitors at her house ; nor could she recall to her mind the personal appearance of any guest at her husband's hospitable board which bore a resemblance to the doctor. A quarter of a century had elapsed, and the tall-faced pupil of the hospitals had grown into the mellow-tinted arbiter of the mortal destinies of men ; and if the doctor had been sufficiently ungallant (which doctors never are) to have made an ample confession on *his* part, it is quite certain he must have said, that he found not in the sinking widow whom he had restored, any remains of the charms and attractions which had in his early days characterized the gay and dashing wife.

Poor Brown however had, in the zenith of his career, been as hospitable as a Madeira mer-

chant, and was wont to welcome to his table men of all trades and nations, all callings and professions. He held it to be part of his business to cement connexions by social intercourse, and therefore while he kept in fact, open house, it was morally impossible for his lady, who was not much interested in the casual guests "below the salt," to recollect all their names or persons. Still she could hardly divest herself of the idea that the doctor's history was a soothing fiction; although her daughter, whose opinion of the said doctor was somehow more favourable than that of her parent, declared her conviction that he was much too honourable, too candid, and too sincere, to endeavour to carry even a favourite point by deception or misrepresentation.

How this paragon of physicians turned out in the wearing, we may perhaps live to see.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a short time after this, that Mr. Brag was called upon to perform a feat for the amusement of his aristocratic friends, which, however powerful the effect it actually did produce, terminated in a manner less agreeable to the actor than the audience.

Upon our hero's arrival one day at the lodgings of Lord Tom Towzle, he found his lordship and two other worthies concocting an answer to a matrimonial advertisement which had appeared in the columns of that most fashionable of all journals, *The Morning Post*; and Jack's appearance to take his seat in such a council was hailed with enthusiasm;—in fact, he was the very man to undertake the conduct of the whole affair.

The advertisement ran thus:—

“ MATRIMONY.—A widow lady, in good circumstances and of high respectability, being, from causes which she will be most happy to explain, left much alone, is desirous of again entering the married state, provided she could find a gentleman of honour and character who might feel a similar wish. The advertiser is aware that an address of this nature is unusual, and may therefore create a prejudice against her in the minds of some ; she is, however, confident, that upon investigation her conduct will be shown to be perfectly justifiable. Letters, post-paid, directed to A. Z, to be left at the Twopenny Post-office the corner of Little Queen Street, Holborn, will be attended to: but as it is not the intention of the advertiser to gratify idle curiosity, no farther particulars will be entered into, until after an interview between the parties.”

“ This is capital !” said Lord Tom. “ We have seen hundreds of men advertising for wives, but the lady being the applicant is something new. However, she is evidently no fool ;

she is determined to see her man before she explains herself. You, my dear Brag, must be the recipient of her wishes and sorrows. We have just concluded a reply, fixing a meeting upon Waterloo Bridge, a locality chosen in preference to any of the Parks, squares, or gardens, on account of its solitude,—a quality which has reduced it as a speculation to worse than *nil*, which, considering it is one of the most splendid ornaments of the metropolis, is most deeply to be regretted.”

Jack was delighted at being fixed upon to talk over the fair advertiser ; his self-acknowledged invincibility was admitted. It was his particular *forte* — and it was speedily arranged that his three companions should remain at a convenient distance until the parley should have proceeded to a certain extent, when they were *manfully* to avow themselves confederates in the scheme, and eventually drive the rash damsel “ fainting from the ground.”

It must be confessed that the system of mate-hunting through the medium of the newspapers, is one which not unnaturally subjects

its practitioners to the assaults of the mischievous and merciless. Whether any of the negotiations, of which such notices are the precursors, terminate satisfactorily,—that is to say, in the union of the parties—it is impossible to say; but it does seem, for people who have eyes and ears and hands and tongues, the strangest possible course of proceeding.

Jack, who in all his antics kept his eye upon the main chance, was by no means the less inclined to the performance of this hoax upon the defenceless innocence of the yet unknown fair-one, by a notion which flashed into his mind, that it might turn out that she really was handsome and rich: a notion which, to be sure, was rather romantic, inasmuch as it would appear that a lady possessing those qualifications—or even one, provided it were the latter—need not have had recourse to a public proclamation of her wish for a husband. Something, however might come of it: it was the opening of a new field for the exertion of his talents, and the display would, he felt certain, place him a step or two higher in the estimation of his noble sporting friends.

The letter, addressed as desired, was despatched, the postage paid, the day and hour were fixed, and the party separated to meet a few minutes previous to the rencontre, and arrange their forces, as has already been described ; three forming a corps of observation, while Brag was performing his light-infantry evolutions in advance.

It must be quite clear to the reader, that upon such an occasion Jack took the greatest possible pains to make himself what he called “ the thing ;” every fold of his coloured neck-handkerchief was laid with the most anxious nicety of form and tint, every curl was crisped into its own peculiar place, and the whole of his costume made to look like that of “ a genteel comedy” playhouse beau, which, as he believed, must be irresistible in a widow’s eyes.

At length the wished-for day and hour arrived. Lord Tom Towzle and his two friends were joined by Brag at the corner of Pall Mall, and proceeded to the scene of action, where they took up their stations a few minutes before two—two being the appointed time for the

meeting — and having separated according to the programme, Mr. John Brag commenced his amatory promenade on one side of the bridge, while his expectant companions occupied the other, but at a considerable distance from him.

It was a pleasing thing to see our hero settling himself and pulling up his shirt collar, then drawing on his glove, then twirling a little switch-like stick which he carried, and then using it in whipping his own boots, shining with a lustre which Day and Martin might have envied. He had scarcely finished one turn when the London clocks began striking two, which at different periods they continued to do, for nearly five minutes, that of St. Paul's booming through the air about midway between the subordinates.—Another turn had been taken, and no fair one was in sight:—a small girl in trousers, with her hair platted into two long tails with bows at their ends, and a bustle, approached — she was evidently no widow; she passed on; Jack tried the eloquence of his eyes upon *her*;—then came a tall, gaunt woman, with a poodle dog. Jack looked at *her*, but she

made no sign. At last there appeared a fine portly-looking dame, dressed in a coquelicot bonnet, topped up with white and green feathers, a lavender-coloured pelisse, and buff-coloured boots. The friends in the distance were convinced that this was *the* person. She looked behind her and before her, and first on one side, and then on the other, and proceeded at a steady pace. She drew a full-sized, white-faced watch from her bosom, and gazed upon its dial, and then tossed her well-plumed head with an air of impatience and surprise at the non-appearance of her summoner.

John Brag, Esq. beheld the vision, and if he had seen all the dæmons of the Hartz Forest pemmican'd into one plump lady, he could not have felt more horror and dismay. By what fatal accident, what evil coincidence, it should so have occurred, he could not imagine; — the extensive being before him, and now fast approaching, was neither more nor less than his respectable mother.

What the deuce could have brought her so far from home, and so wonderfully fine in her

dress, Jack could not imagine ; the question was, what was to be done ? If he advanced, another minute would bring him in contact, and into conversation, with his parent ; if he retreated, he must fall back upon his friends, and she would inevitably follow and accost *him*. The brightness of his genius came to his aid in this unexpected dilemma — he resolved instantly to join her, turn round with her, and fall into the dialogue which he saw must take place, and make his companions believe that his companion was the real object of their expedition, the advertising lady.

This scheme possessed many advantages, for the very circumstance of his relationship to his companion would afford him an opportunity of exhibiting the ease and familiarity of his manner while talking to the supposed advertiser, which would convince his companions that he was proceeding most successfully in his career ; during which period he hoped to set his beloved mother on her way on the other side of the water before they could come up to enact *their* part of laughing at the victim, which it was

settled they were not to 'do, until Brag should give a signal that the moment for explosion had arrived.

The ingenious performer, however, had reckoned without his host. When he and his mother met, the expression of her countenance was anything but agreeable: she seemed, in fact, as much mortified and annoyed by *his* appearance as he had been by *hers*: and with all his desire to keep good friends with her, and wheedle her away as soon as possible, he could not disguise the anxiety with which he watched the approach of the fair husband-hunter, upon whom, so long as his parent remained where she was, he could not of course play his tricks.

"Well, John," said the lady, "who would have thought that we should have met here to-day? I'm sure I don't know how long it is since I've set eyes upon you."

"I have been a good deal out of town," said Brag, acting (for effect with his friends) in the most civil and obsequious manner.

"What," said Mrs. Brag, "at your little

place in Surrey. I suppose you are coming from it now—eh, Johnny?”

“No, not exactly,” said Jack. “May I ask where you are going?”

“Nowhere particular,” replied the lady. “Don’t let me keep *you*. I am only out to make a call. I can go without *you*.”

“I will just see you to the gate,” said Jack, carefully abstaining from any gesture or movement which could in the slightest degree resemble the appointed signal for the co-operation of his friends.

“Don’t mind *me*, John,” said his mother; “it is so nice and airy up here, that I think I shall take a turn or two on the bridge before I go.”

“My dear mother,” said Brag, “you’ll catch your death of cold. Let me persuade you to get off as soon as you possibly can.”

“I like air,” said Mrs. Brag; “so you go your way. Who are those men standing out there? Do you know them?”

“Those men!” said Brag—“what, those three men there?—no—I know nothing about them.”

“ Well then, good b’ye, John,” said the lady. “ Now don’t let me keep you ; it is more than a quarter after two, and I needn’t be at my friend’s till three ; so now go—there ’s a dear !”

This was a puzzler : — the fancy his mother had taken to walk upon Waterloo Bridge seemed to Jack not only the most extraordinary, but the most inconvenient imaginable. He could not leave her without accounting to his friends for not having made the signal, or for the conversation in which it was but too evident to them he was engaged ; nor could he, in fact, go near them, without practically contradicting the declaration he had just made to his mother, that he knew nothing about them. He decided.

“ Well then, mother,” said he, “ if you really *do* like to walk up and down a little, I don’t see why I should not walk up and down with you.”

“ Well, I ’m sure !” said Mrs. Brag, “ wonders will never cease, I think ! Walk up and down with *me* !—why you have not done such a thing these three years. Why, we have never been out together since the day you took me

down to dinner at Blackwall, and kept me shut up in an attic at the 'Artichoke,' because, you said, I wasn't fit to be seen by the company. No, no—go about *your* business, and leave *me* to mine."

"I am waiting for somebody," said Jack.

"Oh! that's it," cried Mrs. Brag. "I thought there must be something in the wind."

"I know you don't like spoiling sport, mother," said Brag. "I'm here on a bit of fun:—I'll let you into the joke. I expect every moment to see an uncommon smart body, who has been fool enough to advertise for a husband—eh!—don't you see? We've tipped her a twopenny, fixing this, as the place of meeting: it's past the time, and I dare say she won't be much longer. Now, perhaps, if *you* stop, she won't come to the scratch."

"Advertise for a husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Brag—"why, what *have* you been at? Did *you* answer the advertisement?"

"Clean as a whistle," said Jack, flourishing his stick, and shaking his head with an air of uncommon self-satisfaction, "smack smooth, and no mistake—eh!"

“What! appointing her here” — said the lady.

“Here at two,” said Brag — “the adorable A. Z. at the oil-shop the corner of Little Queen Street, Holborn.”

“You did, did you?” ejaculated his mother.

“I did,” said Brag.

“Well then, all I say, John,” cried Mrs. Brag, “is, that you ought to be ashamed of yourself. If you was a lone widow woman, how would *you* like to sit moping and mumping all alone, after having been used to sociability and comfort.”

“I see nothing to be ashamed of,” said Brag. “If people will make themselves such Tom-noddies as to put such trumpery stuff into the newspapers, they deserve all they get.”

“How you ferreted it out, I don’t know,” said Mrs. Brag.

“Ferret what out?” said Jack.

“—But *this* I do know,” continued the lady “the letter was not in your hand-writing.”

“How the deuce do you know *that*?” interrupted Jack.

"Why, do you think I don't know your little scribbling pot-hooks and hangers when I see them?" retorted the mother.

"I dare say you do," said the son; "but how came you to see the letter we sent to A. Z. at the pickle-shop?"

"As if you didn't know," said Mrs. Brag. "Do you suppose I am so blind as not to see through *your* antics? No, no: as I said before, how you ferreted it out I don't yet understand; and when you had, I think you might have been better set to work than to hoax a parent."

"I'm all at sea," said Jack. "What have you or your affairs to do with our fun?"

"Do!" screamed the angry lady, "do—why what else should they have to do with? So now you are ashamed of your spy tricks, and want to sham that you did not know who A. Z. at the pickle-shop, as you call her, is."

"I'll be hanged if I do," said Jack.

"Then hanged it is my belief you will be," replied the mother, "*you* know as well as *I* do, that *I* am that individual."

“ You !” cried Jack — “ you A. Z. at the pickle-shop !”

At this moment Brag’s miseries were, as he thought, at their *acmé*—but he was mistaken. The instant he received the unexpected and most unwelcome intelligence, that the object of his diversion and ridicule, to enjoy which three of his first-rate friends had been brought to the scene of action, was really and truly his mother, his course was clear ; apology and conciliation were the weapons with which he was to assail her, and having soothed her anger, he would walk her off the ground as speedily as possible ; a course which he considered quite practicable, now that she must be convinced, however angry, that there was no use in her remaining on it.

“ My dear mother,” said Brag, “ I am truly and seriously sorry for this affair. If I had fancied it possible—but I—really—dear me !—this is all very uncomfortable.”

“ If I thought you didn’t do it on purpose,” said Mrs. Brag, “ I shouldn’t mind it half so much.”

“ My dear mother,” said Brag, “ I do most positively assure you”—

To which point of assurance his speech had arrived, when, tired of procrastination, and satisfied that Brag had admirably performed his part of the farce, his three friends bounced across the road, and joined the unhappy creature, forming, as it were, a semicircle in his rear.

“ Come, Jack,” said Lord Tom Towzle, “ you have had enough of this fun. Is he vastly agreeable, ma’am ? Isn’t he a nice little man ?”

“ What !” exclaimed Mrs. Brag, “ you *do* know these gentlemen ! Why, you little storyteller, you said they were no acquaintances of yours.”

“ If I did ”—said John—

“—*If* you did !” said Mrs. Brag—“ why, you know you did :—and so these are the companions of your trick—the witnesses of your impudence !”

“ Pray, ma’am,” said one of the dandies, “ do not flurry yourself—we are not going to

eat you ! — we were only anxious to have the pleasure of seeing you, because, as we all want wives more or less, we thought, like yourself, we might as well take the opportunity of viewing, before purchase.”

“ Oh, Johnny, Johnny !” said Mrs. Brag, holding up her pink and white-striped parasol in a posture of threat — “ you would do much better if you would but stick to the shop, and do your duty by *me* : if that was the case, you would not drive your poor mother to do what you yourself are most active to turn into ridicule. I ’ll find this out—I ’ll sift it to the very bottom : my belief is, that you have been pumping Jim Salmon, or one of the shopboys, to make this precious discovery, in order to amuse your fine friends at the expense of your parent.”

“ Parent !” exclaimed Lord Tom Towzle — “ what ! ma’am, is — ?—eh !”

“ How !” cried one of his friends.—“ What !” said another.

“ Why, you see,” said Brag, “ I—I ”—

“ ‘ I ’ll tell it you shorter,” said Mrs. Brag, around whom and her auditors a crowd of four

or five of the diurnal two dozen foot-passengers were now congregated : — “ he is *my* son—and not content with letting an excellent business go to rack and ruin while he is cutting his capers, and leaving an anxious mother to a solentary life and melancholy prospects—here he is”—

“ Pray, ma’am,” said Lord Tom Towzle, “ in what line may you be ? ”

“ Wax and tallow chandler,” said Mrs. Brag, “ including sperm and other oils, flambeaux, tapers, bougies, and sealing-wax of all colours and qualities.”

“ She ’s mad, poor thing ! ” said Jack—“ fancies herself my mother ! Did you ever hear ?—go home, ma’am—go—and don’t expose yourself again by writing such stuff in the newspapers.”

“ What ! Jack,” said Lord Tom Towzle, “ is A. Z. at the pickle-shop, corner of Little Queen Street, Holborn, your mamma ? ”

“ So she says,” said Brag.

“ Says ! ” exclaimed the indignant matron,—“ it isn’t that you are much to be proud of :

but here, gentlemen, here's the card of the shop—I never travel without half a pack in my pocket—here, see—judge who is right now. Oh! if his poor dear father could but get out of his grave in Cripplegate churchyard to see the use his darling son has put all his indulgence to”—

“He would probably go back again into it, ma'am, as fast as he possibly could,” said Lord Tom.

“For *my* part,” said the widow, looking at the slice of nobility which had last addressed her, “I begin to think you are no better than he is; however”—

Here, an admonitory — “Come — move on, move on,” from two policemen on duty, put a check to the conversation, which promised to become more and more animated.

“Move on!” said Mrs. Brag, who at this period was in a burning rage, the flame of which glowed on her cheeks and sparkled in her eyes:—“yes, Mr. Policeman, I'll move on, and move off too; but it would serve that little whipper-snapper cockney son of mine right

to send him to the Station House for what he has done."

"Go home, poor soul!" said Brag, trying what "dejected pity" might do:—"go home, and get cool: I'll come and see you soon." Then, turning to his companions, he added:—"I've heard that gentle remedies are best, eh! —the soothing system, as Dr. Dulcimer calls it, eh! Go home."

"Don't be a fool, Jack," exclaimed Mrs. Brag, "you'll repent of this some day. All these fine-weather friends who set you on to play tricks for them to laugh at, will leave you the minute your troubles begin, just as rats run out of a falling house; and perhaps they would not be so fond of you *now*, if they knew that your town mansion was nothing but a brass plate, and your little place in Surrey, a second floor over a carpenter's shop. Get you gone — get you gone! If you have no feeling for yourself, Jacky, I cannot help feeling for you."

Away flounced the indignant mother; and having squeezed herself with some difficulty through one of the anti-cheating turnstiles at the end of

the bridge, bounced along Wellington Street towards the Strand, Lord Tom Towzle signaling himself, and delighting the spectators, by imitating, at the top of his voice, the crowing of a cock, triumphantly victorious in the overthrow of an enemy — an exhibition which has been more than once received with unbounded applause in a theatre in Westminster, which yet remains beyond the reach of the Licenser.

“Well, now,” said one of Jack’s three friends, “who is this old catamaran? Why does she insist upon being your mother? — is it because her name is the same? — or” —

Here again was Jack puzzled most wonderfully. To renounce her as a parent, and denounce her as a cheat, was something too strong even for *his* assurance.

“—Why,” said our hero, “I believe, if truth were to be told, she is my mother.”

“Truth to be told!” said Lord Tom, “why, Jack, although there may, in these wicked days, be something like reason in the proverb that says, ‘it is a wise child who knows his own father,’ — the adage cannot hold good as re-

gards the female parent; — there can be no great doubt about *that*.”

“ Why,” said Jack again, who generally began his speeches with why, — why, he knew not,—“ why, you see, my mother ”—And then again nature interposed : — it was not feeling, it was not tenderness, nor even affection, which held him back, or checked the tongue on which some flippant falsehood was gathering — it was instinct, — not better in its character perhaps (if so good) than that of a chimpanzee, but it was enough to paralyze his efforts to shuffle off the relationship between himself and the maltreated A. Z. at the pickle-shop at the corner of Little Queen Street, Holborn—“ Why,” again said Jack, “ I am sorry we made so bad a shot,—because I believe it is a good deal my own fault—I have driven her to it, eh ! Can’t keep at work and ” —

Brag had now fallen into his own trap ; his impudence for once failed him, and he stood confessed the son of the determined husband-hunting widow of the deceased tallow chandler.

“ But, Jack,” said Lord Tom, “ what did

your amiable parent mean by the brass plate, and the carpenter's shop—the mansion and the villa?"

"Oh, that," said Jack, "was all passion. When a woman's back's up, she'll say anything, no matter what. I am sorry it has happened, because it has exposed her, and certainly has not come off the bat, clean, smack smooth, and no mistake."

"No, that you cannot say," said Lord Tom; "however, never mind it; the old lady will forgive you. You must go and see her, and make it up. Suppose we all go in a body and apologise, and I'll explain to her the circumstances of the affair, and convince her that you really were totally ignorant that *she* was the advertiser, eh! Shall we do *that*?"

This proposition produced a violent accession to Jack's already raging fever. The thought of Lord Tom Towzle and the two "nobs," as he called them, proceeding *en masse* through the shop to the back-parlour beforementioned, under the row of wooden candles fluttering in the breeze, was perfect misery to him.

“No, no,” said Brag, “by no means! I have always noticed that a woman cools soonest when left alone.—My mother,” said Brag, assuming a new tone, and which he thought to be the wisest, “is a woman of what you call strong feeling—mighty high—old family—and proud as Lucifer. She’s in a passion; and when she is out of it I’ll go to her—mollify her, eh!—smooth her down, and make all snug and comfortable.”

“—‘And no mistake,’ Jack,” said Lord Tom. “Well, all I hope is, your nerves won’t be shaken for the race to-morrow. ‘Slap-bang’ is the favourite; and riding a winning horse is no very hard task”—

“Nervous!” said Jack, who began as usual to rally—“what is to shake my nerves?—an angry woman? No, no: I know the female sex too well to mind a few passing clouds; and as for the *exposé*, as the French call it, it’s nothing to me. My mother, as I have just said, is a woman of excellent family; how can I help her having been so silly as to marry a tall-chandler.”

This mode of putting the case set Jack's friends laughing with him rather than at him. Like a cat, Jack generally contrived to fall upon his legs, however "high" the tumble; and they all agreed that he was perfectly right, and that he had behaved in the most moderate and judicious manner: and when they parted, renewed the appointment for the morrow with the usual cordiality.

As for Johnny, far different indeed were his feelings: the scene on the bridge was one which never could be effaced from his memory. The coquelicot bonnet; the striped parasol; the white and green feathers; the buff boots; the object of the visit; the conversation; the disclosure; the mystery of the plate, and the history of the villa; and, above all, the exhibition of the shop-card, and the conviction that he was the son of A. Z. at the pickle-shop—it was all vastly well for his tiger friends to laugh it off—but what would form the subject of their conversation after dinner that very day at Crockford's, where the conclave would be secured from his intrusion? What would be

the nickname which was ever after destined to distinguish him in the contemporaneous history of society ?

It was clear that his end, as far as that sort of "life" was concerned, was drawing to a close. Two practicable measures now presented themselves to his imagination, both of which are said to go by destiny — hanging or marriage — the halter or the altar, and, according to Jack's counterchanged aspiration of the *h*, it was difficult to discover his preference by his own pronunciation of the word. His mind was soon made up ; and being assured that his secrets — as he considered the shop, the door-plate, and the villa — would, in the hands in which they had now been authoritatively deposited, be secrets not many hours longer, he resolved within himself that he had no time to lose in bringing the widow to action ; and, as the reader already is aware, that let what might have happened, he never intended to ride "Slap-bang" over the forbidden lands of Wrigglesworth — that evening and the next day were to be devoted to the grand experiment of his life.

In putting this affair into execution, the natural infirmity of his disposition was remarkably exemplified. Convinced that Frank Rush-ton was satisfied of the prepossession of both Mrs. Dallington and Miss Englefield in his favour, and equally assured of the wisdom of Lord Tom's advice as to the course to be pursued, he determined in the outset to act upon the principle of the one, and adopt the practice recommended by the other : — that is to say, to play off both the ladies one against the other, but not to commit himself to either, by writing ; it being evident to the meanest capacity (except that of Johnny's) that neither of two sisters, nor of two women, indeed, who were *not* sisters, living in the same house, and in circumstances such as those in which Mrs. Dallington and Blanche were placed, could possibly receive anything like a proposal, or even a probable approach to it, without communicating the circumstance to the other. The mingled vanity and stupidity of Johnny, in the midst of his gaiety and amiability, prevented this single circumstance striking him ; and, secure in his

own influence over both the fair creatures, and his intimate knowledge of "females," he resolved upon Lord Tom's assumed doctrine, that both ladies being actually engaged to other men, neither would commit herself to the other by the acknowledgment of a passion for him: this decided him to fire both his barrels in rapid succession, giving the unmarried lady the preference by a few hours.

Having, however, revolved the affair in his mind, he again changed his original intention as to the mode of attack, and resolved to address the widow personally — and the sister by letter; — for, in spite of Lord Tom's *friendly* caution about writing, Jack did not feel himself quite a match for the tender delicacy of Blanche in the way of dialogue; having moreover, with all his avowed notions of practical advances, a most sensitive apprehension of a scream or a fainting-fit, which he feared might alarm the family, arouse the widow to a sense of his libertine insincerity, and explode the whole of his great undertaking.

Accordingly, in the course of the afternoon of

the day upon which the unlucky affair of A. Z.—the alpha and omega of his destruction—occurred, he proceeded to one of his favourite haunts, and in pursuance of the scheme which he had now arranged, addressed a letter to Miss Englefield, avowing, not, it must be owned, in the most direct and explicit terms, but in a tone and language which it was impossible for any lady to mistake or misapprehend,—a devotion the most perfect and entire to her mind and person ; alluding, in as good English as he could contrive to write, to the encouragement he felt he had received, trusting to her kindness and consideration, if he were mistaken, to forgive him ; and hinting that Mr. Rushton himself was not altogether unconscious of the preference of which he felt so proud.

This he despatched before he slept, which he did at his “little place in Surrey ;” and when he woke from a sort of fitful slumber in which he had passed the night, he began bitterly to repent of a step which he had taken while under the influence of a kind of desperation. However, as it *was* done, he determined to

“go the whole hog,” and follow up this feint at the unmarried lady, which might after all be turned into a real attack in case of a failure with the widow.

Accordingly, at the earliest decent period for calling upon anybody, Brag proceeded to make his visit to Mrs. Dallington ; but here again his courage failed him. His mind was made up to the deciding step of trying his fortune, and as he went along, he rehearsed — or, as they say of birds, recorded all the sweet notes in which he should address her, if he found her alone. As he proceeded, his spirits mounted, until he had worked himself into a serviceable state of amativeness : he reached the door, —knocked—the noise seemed like thunder :

“ He trembled at the sound himself had made”—

his courage began, like that of Acres in the play, to “ ooze out at his fingers’ ends ;” and the terror he experienced when the servant told him his mistress *was* at home, can scarcely be imagined.

The crisis had arrived ; and as it *was* to come, perhaps it was better it should have oc-

curred before any of his mother's intemperate disclosures on the bridge had reached what Jack was in the habit of calling "the West end." He mounted the stairs with his throat a little parched, and his hands a little cold; but when the door of the boudoir was opened, and he found his charming hostess alone, the sight was fatal.

"Why, my dear Mr. Brag," said Mrs. Dalington, holding out her hand towards him, "where *have* you been—hiding yourself in the country? I believe you have some attraction at your place in Surrey, of which we here in town are not aware."

The allusion was not pleasant. Brag—the undaunted, unabashed lady-killer—sat himself down in a chair opposite the sofa on which he found the widow seated writing at a table before it, and felt assured that, by some telegraphic or other communication, the fair object of his hopes and ambition had received the intelligence of the affair on the bridge:—so 'tis that

"Conscience doth make cowards of us all."

“No,” said Brag, endeavouring to collect himself, “I have been staying in Hertfordshire for the last few days.”

“I assure you we have missed you very much,” said the lady, who, fortunately or unfortunately, as the case may be, for Brag—was, for reasons of her own, in the best possible humour for encouraging his civilities, —“you can’t think how dull we have been without you. My belief is, that your friend Lord Tom is the cause of your abdication from town: he is so fond of his shooting matches and his steeple chases, and you, we hear, are his prime minister: in short, he cannot exist without you.”

“Oh!” said Brag, looking very much obliged, and very silly, “you flatter me. I assure you I just do these sort of things by way of a start now and then; but—I—it isn’t my taste—it obliges Tom—and that sort of thing; but—I—I—feel”—

“What!” said the widow, “do you mean to disown your affection for a sporting life, who are, as Sir Charles Lydiard says, the very life of sporting?”

“ Sir Charles is very civil,” said Brag, who began to feel conscious of an approach to his subject : “ I don’t think *he* is very fond of sport — of any sort,” was added in a whisper scarcely audible.

“ He is a strange creature, isn’t he ?” said Mrs. Dallington. “ A most excellent man — kind, and all *that*—but *so* cold in his manner—I am sure he makes enemies by it.”

“ Why,” said Brag, looking down, and rubbing his hat, “ I don’t know what he may be to females — he *is* certainly — rather — eh ! — rather ”—

“ Oh !” said Mrs. Dallington, “ don’t be afraid, I shall not repeat a word you say about him. I quite agree with you. Women, Mr. Brag,” and the widow suited her looks to the word — “ are fond of spirit and vivacity. The days of sad, sickly, sighing swains, are gone by : society is enlightened, and diffidence seems to be considered in these times merely a mark of stupidity. I suppose everything is destined to travel at an increased pace, and I, for one, admit a partiality for fast travelling, as far as *that* goes.”

This was pretty strong encouragement to an aspirant who was in a hurry, and engaged to ride "Slap-bang" across a county the next day — but Brag was Brag, every inch of him.

"Yes," said Brag, "it's uncommon pleasant: I don't think, however, I shall ever be caught giving up horses for steam."

This sudden digression from the figurative to the matter-of-fact, evidently disappointed the widow, who, truth to be told, had never appeared, either alone or in society, so cordial in her manner to our hero as upon this special occasion, upon which, of all others, it was most important to his views that she should be so. The first opening she had given him for a little self-recommendation in accordance with her avowed taste, he had botched, — missed his tip, — and become prosy.

"I have got a good many shares in the railroads," said Jack.

This settled him, and, it must be confessed, fully justified his own preference for literary correspondence over verbal communication, upon tender subjects.

Mrs. Dallington gave a look ; Brag, luckily, did not see it. A pause ensued, but, as our volatile widow was playing a game, it did not last long.

“ I wonder,” said the widow, looking at Brag with an expression of interest — “ I wonder *you* have never married, Mr. Brag.”

This bit of wonderment nearly took away his breath : his tongue seemed too big for his mouth ;—he began to twiddle his fingers, felt his ears get red, and his nose cold.

“ Ha, ha !” said he, and rubbed his hat again.

“ So gay, so gallant, and so devoted to the fair,” continued Mrs. Dallington, “ I should think you had only to ask and command. I do not at all understand why you haven’t yet thrown your handkerchief.”

Brag, who did not in the least understand why he should perform any such operation, merely inclined his body.

“ I have been married myself,” said Mrs. Dallington, “ and although I soon became a widow, I am quite sure that where there are

reciprocity of affection, congeniality of taste, and sympathy of feeling, no state of society can be so truly satisfactory and so entirely good,—I have no word so short or so emphatic for it as that—as marriage.”

“It must be uncommon agreeable, I should think,” said Brag, looking “uncommon” foolish.

“Now there’s Frank Rushton,” said Mrs. Dallington, “a most delightful companion—a most accomplished scholar,—and, as I believe, extremely attached to my poor dear sister—and yet, you see, they don’t get married. I believe that all you agreeable, gay men of the world, try everything in your power to turn the heads of poor girls, without any serious intention of eventually making them happy.”

This voluntary confession of facts and opinions, delivered in Mrs. Dallington’s most agreeable, off-hand manner, although it corroborated in Brag’s mind all his former belief of the interest he had created in the family, so

astounded him, that with the opportunity at hand, for which he had so earnestly sought, he remained a mere listener at the mercy of his idol.

“As for Blanche,” said the widow, “as I have great faith in the philosophy which inculcates the belief of a love of opposites, I am sure she, tender, shy, and retiring as she is, ought to be over head and ears in love with Frank; but I don’t believe she cares the least bit in the world about him. To be sure she has a right to please herself. She has a large fortune, and nobody to control her, and, I think, would make a most admirable wife for any man who knew how to appreciate her. However, I know nothing about her views or proceedings; we have no confidences; we each go our own way. I never trouble *her* with my advice, and, of course, *she* never presumes to give me any.”

“I am sure,” said Brag, “you would make anybody in love with wedlock — I ’m — sure — You wonder that Miss Englefield does not

marry Mr. Rushton ;—I — often — think—I do indeed — that — you — I beg your pardon — I mean Sir Charles—eh !—and no mistake”—

“ Oh !” said the widow, “ I quite understand you. Sir Charles is a good creature — but as for love, I don’t believe he ever thinks of such a thing. Certainly he is not of *our* opinion as to gaiety and vivacity.”

“ I was thinking,” said Brag, looking as white as a sheet, and crumpling his remarkably nice hat in a paroxysm of something between hope and fear, “—that—you—really ought not to permit—eh !—this—he is such an odd man—eh !”

“ My dear Mr. Brag,” said Mrs. Dallington, “ there are secrets in all families.”

Brag perfectly agreed in the proposition, and directly did there flit before his eyes coquelicot bonnets, striped parasols, buff boots, brass plates, green and white feathers, and a tribe of visions more horrible than Fuseli’s fiercest efforts after a supper of half-boiled pork.

“ There *are* people with whom we become

habitually familiarized," said Mrs. Dallington, "but who never touch the heart."

"Is Mr. Rushton," stammered Jack, "one of those?"

"Why really," replied Mrs. Dallington, — "Blanche not being here to answer for herself — for although you never inquired after her, I ought perhaps to have told you she has been out of town for two days, and does not return till to-morrow, — *I* was not so particularly referring to *her* case."

This must have opened the eyes of a mole. Brag, in a moment, became aware that Mrs. Dallington could know nothing of his rash note to Blanche, and felt more convinced than ever that the widow was his own.

"The case," stammered John — "you don't — that is — really" —

"You are a most amiable creature!" said Mrs. Dallington. "I see how diffident you are of your own merits — how unconscious you are of your own power!"

"Yes," faltered Brag, quite overcome — "yes — am I — that is — may I — do I make my-

self understood ? — is — that is — don't I — eh !
— if — but ” —

— “ Sir Charles Lydiard,” said a servant, throwing open the door, and announcing the worthy baronet, who entered the room with his usual mild placidity of manner, and after shaking hands with the lady, turned round, and beheld — his aversion. The look he gave Mrs. Dallington expressed all his feelings upon *that* point : nor was it lost upon Brag himself, who collected his hat, gloves, and switch-stick, and having gathered them up, made his bow, and left his adorable widow *tête-à-tête* with the baronet, perfectly assured of his triumphant success with her, and bitterly repenting having exposed so much of his heart to her less well-provided-for sister.

Never, to be sure, was there a more perfect illustration of the character of the swaggering pretender to *bonnes fortunes* than the melancholy proceedings of our wretched little hero. The ball was at his foot—the game was in his hands—and yet he, the slayer of hearts, and the assassin of reputations, cowered before the fostering

kindness of his liberal hostess, and sneaked out of the presence of the man whom he believed to be his defeated rival, in ridiculing whom he had first joined with his mistress to take a step of which we shall hear more hereafter.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE are some people upon whom advice is thrown away, and who, holding themselves to be wiser than their councillors, rush "*in medias res*" where

—————"Angels fear to tread."

Mr. Brag, who did not want for that sort of intellectual quality called cunning, was nevertheless, as has been already made tolerably evident, favoured by nature with an overbalancing share of conceit, and when he had ascertained the tone of the widow's feelings towards him, and satisfied himself that his case was reduced to something very like "ask and have," he resolved upon taking the step against which his friend Lord Tom had so strenuously advised him, and which, as a matter of assurance, was rendered "trebly hazardous" by his

having previously adopted it with regard to her sister.

The Irish gentleman's definition of a bottle of soda water we will not stop to repeat, but it would have applied with tolerable accuracy to the character of our hero. Although he had extracted from Mrs. Dallington what he believed to be quite sufficient to justify his best hopes, he felt in the solitude of his "little place in Surrey" a consciousness of inability to conduct the storm personally, or carry her heart by a *coup de main*—unless, indeed, a letter might be so considered—and therefore, spite of the advice of his experienced Mentor, he proceeded to address the fair widow in an epistle, a repetition of which it is not necessary to inflict upon the reader, but which contained a distinct declaration and a formal proposal.

Mr. Brag had now shot his bolt, and nothing remained but to see its effect. It must be admitted that even *he* was in some sort nervous and fidgety; but that happy self-satisfaction, which when he was not required to make an effort never forsook him, kept his spirits on the

“credit side of the account.” The letter, however, was gone—past recal—and therefore the next wisest thing to not sending it in the first instance, was to live upon the hopes of its success.

Upon the popular “wheel within wheel” system, the widow had acted so as to induce the declaration which it contained, satisfied that by “playing” her baronet upon the occasion, she might “land” him,—but certainly not prepared to find that Blanche was placed in a similar position. As things turned out, the effect it produced was striking.

Blanche had just returned from her two days’ visit to the country. The moment she entered the house, she hastened to her sister’s boudoir, where she found her in the very act of reading, with evident marks of amazement and exultation, the avowal of Mr. Brag’s affections.

“My dear Blanche,” exclaimed Mrs. Dalington, “you are arrived at the very moment to congratulate me on a conquest. I have received a proposal”—

“What!” said Blanche, “from Sir Charles?”

“No,” replied her sister, in a tone which certainly conveyed the idea that she wished she had: — “I think you will guess without much difficulty, knowing the man.”

“The Fates are propitious,” said Blanche; “I too have been so fortunate as to merit the decided approbation of a lover, who declares the happiness of his life, and the value of his existence, depend upon my answer.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Mrs. Dallington: — “why, *my* worshipper uses the very same expression. Yes — here it is: — ‘The happiness of my life, and the value of my existence, depend upon your answer.’”

“That *is* curious,” said Blanche; “may I ask who the tender swain is?”

“Guess,” said Mrs. Dallington.

“I cannot,” replied her sister.

“What! not our exquisite little friend Brag!” said Mrs. Dallington. “I was always sure how our acquaintance would end: I wonder it did not strike *you*.”

“Why,” said Blanche, “the reason my suspicions did not lead that way is rather a good one — he has made me a proposal.”

“When did you receive it?” said the widow.

“Yesterday,” replied Blanche, “it was forwarded to me from town.”

“I suppose it is a circular,” said the widow.

“No, no,” said Blanche, “mine is the original, yours is the copy.”

“What *can* the man mean?” said Mrs. Dalington. “Does he really suppose himself so fascinating, that, like the rattlesnake, he has nothing to do but look at us to induce us to drop into his mouth? Now if he had confined his attentions to *me*” —

“Ah!” interrupted Miss Englefield, “that is exactly the case; if he had confined his attentions to *me*, the affair would have been different: as it is” —

“No, no,” said the widow, “don’t misunderstand me, my dear Blanche. I do assure you I am neither envious nor jealous. You should be welcome to all his attentions and all his affections — only please to observe that *I*

intended him to take the step he has taken, and availed myself of your absence to lead him on to a declaration."

"For what earthly purpose?" said Blanche.

"Man," said the widow, "is an imitative animal, and everybody knows the force of example."

"But do you want anybody for whom you have a regard to imitate Mr. Brag?" asked Blanche.

"In the one particular of which we are now speaking," replied the widow, "I do. It seems to me, Blanche, that the lives we are both leading are full of worry and vexation: yours, because you will not encourage your avowed lover; mine, because the man whose claim upon my affections I admit, will not avow himself. It strikes me that this most marvellous display of assurance on the part of our little friend may serve us both incalculably, by bringing both our gentlemen to a proper sense of their duty; — to excite poor dear Sir Charles into a determination, and to soothe Rushton into a reasonable state of mind."

"I confess," said Blanche, "I do not ex-

actly understand the course of proceeding by which this desirable end is to be attained."

"Let us both accept the little man," said the widow. "The natural awkwardness of his position must produce a disclosure of his schemes; and what appears to me infinitely better fun, his vanity and conceit. That, which must happen, is, however, only a secondary object with me;—the discovery of the affair will show our capricious lovers that there *are* men who, instead of hesitating to propose to one woman, are prepared to make offers to two; and moreover, my dear Blanche, the very notion that we are exposed to such temptations will urge our strange friends to some decided step. You must accept Mr. Brag."

"Me!" exclaimed Blanche: "I accept him—an antidote to everything like affection of any kind!"

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Dallington, "I am sure he is very genteel; he curls his hair, wears rings and chains, smokes cigars, rides races, and lives with Lord Tom Towzle. What would you have?—accept him you must."

“Never!” cried Blanche.

“You must, my dear girl,” replied Mrs. Dallington, “and so will I:—yes, both of us—he is too charming to be monopolized by one. You must write to him.”

“A billet-doux?” enquired Blanche.

“Exactly so,” said Mrs. Dallington. “Let us both be desperately in love with Lord Tom’s tiger: you will see how odiously jealous Rush-ton will be in a day, and Sir Charles.—Oh! never mind; write—write—write, and I will dictate.”

“Write what, my dear sister?” asked Miss Englefield.

“A civil acceptance of his offer,” said Mrs. Dallington, “couched in terms becoming the gratitude of a young lady of small pretensions.”

“I am infinitely obliged to you, my dear sister,” said Blanche, “but really”—

“Really,” interrupted Mrs. Dallington, “you must allow *me* to be the best judge of what is best suited to my juniors; so sit you down and write, and I will dictate.”

“But what will the world say?” asked Blanche.

“What world, my dear?” said Mrs. Dallington—“Mr. Brag’s world—or the world at large? What the one chooses to say will signify nothing to us; and what we may choose to do will signify as little to the other. Trust in *me*; be assured that I will not mislead you, whatever may be my intentions with respect to your scarecrow of a lover.”

“*My* lover!” cried Blanche, colouring crimson at the imputation—“your lover too!”

“Both,” said the widow. “Now sit down; rely upon it, it is a kindness sometimes to be cruel:—so write.”

Blanche, almost unresistingly, seated herself at the very identical table at which Jack had found Mrs. Dallington established the day before; and mechanically arranging the writing materials, looked at her sister with an expression of unconsciousness of what she was to say, and of enquiry as to the words she was to set down.

“Are you ready to begin?” said the widow.

“Yes,” said Blanche — “to obey your instructions most dutifully.”

“Now, then,” said Mrs. Dallington, “write: — ‘I scarcely know how to reply to your flattering letter.’”

“I am sure I shall do it all wrong,” said Blanche writing. —

“‘I have struggled for some time —’

“Some time,” repeated Blanche — “struggled with what?”

“Go on,” said Mrs. Dallington : — “‘for some time with my feelings,—but the manner in which Mr. Rushton, whom you have often seen here, conducts himself towards me is’ —

“What would you have me say, sister?” said Blanche, hesitating. “You know, if nobody else does, that I love him, and” —

“Never mind that,” said the widow, “go on : — ‘conducts himself towards me is such, that I can endure his treatment no longer.’”

“My dear sister,” said Blanche, “you are laughing at me : — you wish me to expose myself.”

“Why do you think so, my dear?” said

Mrs. Dallington. "You have told me a hundred times that he torments you to death."

"Yes," said Blanche, "but what I say to *you*, and what I write to this man"—

"Well," said the widow, "then put—'vexes me,' instead of 'tormenting me.'"

"That is better," said Blanche, continuing to write.

"'That any man upon earth would be preferable in my eyes,'" said Mrs. Dallington.

"No," said Blanche, tossing up her head with unusual animation, and throwing down the pen, "*that* I never *will* write!"

"What innocence!" said Mrs. Dallington. "My dear sister, we are only setting a simpleton-trap, and"—

"It does not signify," said Blanche, "I"—

"No, it does *not* signify, so write," said the widow. "There now—go on—it will be *my* turn next. Tell him you shall expect him to call—this evening. I will write him an equally tender answer, and make a similar appointment. What can it signify what one says to such a man under such circumstances?"

“ But, my dear creature,” said Blanche, “ what an opinion he must form of us if he thinks we are both in love with him !”

“ It is quite clear that he *does* think so now,” said Mrs. Dallington ; “ so this will not make it one bit the worse. Here—make room—let me write mine: all you have to do is to watch the results of our invitation, and be as cold as ice to Rushton when you next see him. Rely upon it, my dear innocent, we shall have fun, and, if I mistake not, husbands, out of this scheme, which, moderate as my pretensions are, I must say I think admirable, inasmuch as it mystifies three men at once,—and all—all for their own eventual good.”

“ I believe you take a pleasure in tormenting,” said Blanche, who was busy sealing her note, while her sister was rapidly writing her’s in that elegant and unintelligible hand which is the universal medium of lady-like correspondence, when, to their surprise and confusion, the door of the boudoir was thrown open, and Sir Charles Lydiard and Mr. Rushton were announced.

“ Hide your letter !” said Blanche.

“ Me !” said Mrs. Dallington, loud enough to be heard by Sir Charles ; “ trust to my fidelity.”

“ By Jove !” whispered Rushton to Lydiard, “ they are writing — writing notes and hiding them !”

“ So I perceive,” said Sir Charles, coldly.

“ Well, ladies,” said Rushton, advancing towards Blanche, “ we have found you busy.”

Blanche bowed diffidently, and finished sealing her note.

“ What is the matter with you, Sir Charles ?” said Mrs. Dallington ; “ you look out of sorts and out of spirits.”

“ No, madam,” said Lydiard, “ I am neither ; only I did not know whether I might venture to break in upon your literary avocations.”

“ Quite right, Sir Charles,” said Mrs. Dallington. “ People who make up their minds not to pry into the business of their neighbours, are most likely not to be disturbed in their serenity.”

“ Miss Englefield,” said Rushton, “ appears to be of a similar opinion. I confess I am not of a temper to bear with such things. I hate three-cornered notes, if they are not addressed to myself.”

“ You are equally right with Sir Charles,” said the widow. “ I *am* writing a billet-doux, but I have just finished.”

“ Upon my word,” said Lydiard, “ it must be a most interesting affair. I think I never saw you more animated than you seem to be while despatching this note : all I am afraid of is, that I have been the cause of its abrupt termination.”

During this dialogue, Rushton endeavoured to draw Blanche into a conversation with regard to the note *she* was writing, but she avoided answering his questions ; and supported in the course she had adopted by her sister’s conduct towards Sir Charles, so completely damped the ardent spirits of her mercurial lover, that he crossed to the other side of the room, and threw himself upon the sofa.

Mrs. Dallington having sealed her note, rang

the bell, and directed the servant to send it immediately.

“ Now,” said Sir Charles, “ I have found it out — you are merely trying me: the note, after all, is destined for me.”

“ As you doubt me, Sir Charles,” said Mrs. Dallington, “ I shall leave you to discover the truth.”

“ I am certain,” said the baronet, with much more animation than he usually exhibited, “ it can be to no one else. I shall return to my hotel to receive it.”

“ Do,” said the widow, “ and justify me from your suspicions.” Saying which, the lady, with an air of being particularly piqued, left the room by one door, while Sir Charles, convinced that she had taken some deciding step with regard to himself, retired by the other, leaving the other pair of lovers *tête-à-tête*.

The moment her sister left the room, Blanche rose to follow her.

“ Stay, Blanche,” said Rushton, “ one moment.”

“ No, Mr. Rushton,” said Miss Englefield, “ I am too angry with you to stay.”

“ Surely,” said Rushton, “ you cannot be angry with my jealousy—a jealousy that springs only from excess of affection.”

“ No man,” said Blanche, “ can possess real affection for any one of whose sincerity he has a constant doubt. I have forgiven these mad fits twenty times, always hoping and expecting that time would show you your error ; but no, —our very last quarrel occurred ten minutes after our last reconciliation.”

“ Recollect, Blanche,” said Rushton, “ the events of that day — the day before you left town:—there you were—the sought and admired of the party — speaking kindly and looking kindly to everybody except me, of whom, as I felt, you took no notice.”

“ Well, sir,” said Blanche, “ and if I were cold, and even cross, you need not have been so greatly surprised, if you had recollected how you called me to account for sitting next Mr. Brag the last time he was here, and entering

into a common conversation with him about some of his feats and enterprizes."

"By Heavens!" exclaimed Rushton, "how I hate that fellow—his easy assurance, his self-conceit: but the fault is all your's and your sister's." That very night there he was whispering his infernal nonsense in your ear, to your evident amusement and satisfaction, while I, distressed and disturbed by your conduct, was losing my money at *écarté* with Lady Begbrook, and you sat laughing at my folly and agitation."

"I *did* laugh," said Blanche, "but I did not laugh alone."

"No, no, that's true," said Rushton. "I dare say there are minds and tempers that can bear these irritations—I confess mine cannot. Possibly I expect too much; probably I am romantic; but, I *do* say, and *will* say, that however charming I may wish my wife to be, I do not exactly desire that she should be anxious to make herself universally agreeable, nor equally delightful, to everybody."

"Really, Mr. Rushton," said Blanche, "these

fancies of yours are unjustifiable and unbearable. I confess that it would cost me serious pain to terminate our acquaintance, in which I have, when you are rational, great happiness; but such conduct surely deserves to lose my esteem. I can neither smile nor sigh, walk nor sit down, talk nor be silent, go out nor come in, but you attribute some motive to my actions. They bring me a letter — of course it is from a rival; I dance with somebody — you are either angry or in despair. I am civil to Mr. Brag, my sister's visiter, and the next moment I see you wholly unconscious of what you are doing, crushing my fan to atoms in revenge. Oh! Mr. Rushton, Mr. Rushton, such conduct in a lover is but the anticipation of tyranny in a husband."

"Tyranny, Blanche!" said Rushton, suddenly softened into subjection; "what an idea!"

"I am afraid," said Blanche, "that our hearts are not formed to be united: we had better agree upon one point — to part."

"There it is!" exclaimed Rushton; "the

truth is out. You have now declared yourself; you hate me — you cast me off. I knew there was some new attachment formed. Yes, yes — we *will* part, Miss Englefield. There *is* a woman in the world, thank Heaven! who has a better opinion of me than you have: from *her* gentle heart my wounded spirit may find relief.”

“ Oh !” said Blanche, “ I am quite aware of that lady’s name. Go, sir — leave me : let this be our last interview.”

Blanche spoke these words with so much firmness, that she began to be afraid Rushton would take her at her word ; nor did Rushton’s answer much relieve her apprehensions.

“ So be it !” said he. “ I will conquer this feeling — I *will* love where my love can be returned. But, madam, I insist upon one thing — tell me, who is the man who has supplanted me in your affections.”

“ Why,” said Blanche smiling — “ should I do that ?”

“ Why ?” exclaimed Rushton — “ because he shall at least set his life upon the hazard.

Name him to me, I desire : tell me where he is to be found, and if——”

“ Mr. Rushton,” said Blanche, “ I wish you a good morning. Whenever you are reasonable, and can conduct yourself temperately, I will explain my conduct to you. In your present state of excitement, I must leave you.”

Saying which, the fair creature quitted the room, leaving the infuriated victim of love and jealousy in an agony of despair.

The moment she was gone, he stared wildly round. In the crowd of conflicting passions which now assailed him, anger was in the ascendant ; and, snatching his hat from the table, he rushed down stairs and quitted the house, swearing, almost audibly, that he never would enter it again.

It was clear that the project of the ladies had been so far successful as to set the whole mass of affections and feelings of the two gentlemen into a state of fermentation ; because, while this scene was acting at the widow's, Sir Charles Lydiard had been to his hotel, where he found no note from the lady, and whence,

after waiting a much longer time than would have been occupied in its transmission by her servant, he proceeded to take his ride, with a distracted brain, having come to a determination that the next day should conclude his acquaintance with the avowed and self-convicted coquette, who had now proved what he had long suspected, that she was merely playing a game with him for her own diversion. In this critical juncture we must for the present leave them, in order to introduce the reader to some new arrivals, as well as to give him some information of the convalescent mother, her dutiful daughter, and the philanthropic physician.

The amiable person last named continued his attentions to the widow Brown and her daughter: his visits became diurnally regular; and the satisfaction he derived from the recovering health of the one, and the improving spirits of the other, assumed a character which became evident to both. The anxiety he expressed for their comfort, the assiduous attention with which he contrived little surprises in the way of excursions in the neighbourhood of their

present residence, which he represented as conducive to the re-establishment of his patient, were marks of a feeling not to be concealed or disguised; nor, to say truth, did Mead appear at all desirous of practising any delusion upon either of his new friends. It was perfectly clear that he had formed an attachment, which from its nature and principle promised to be permanent.

Mead had watched the conduct of Anne during the illness of her mother, had attentively regarded the workings of her mind, and had satisfied himself that she possessed every attribute desirable in a wife. Their acquaintance had commenced, and his acquaintance with her mother had been renewed, under circumstances which gave a deep interest in his mind to her fate and fortunes. Mead was one of those modest, unassuming men, who once in an age attain to eminence without having forced their way by impudent assurance, or having been pushed forward by favouritism or connexion. Success had not spoiled him; and while rising to the first rank in his profession, he was the same gentle,

unassuming, affectionate being that he was, while toiling up the "steep ascent to fame."

It was not that Dr. Mead entertained the unfavourable opinions of the higher classes, which it is the continual effort of the lower orders to inculcate; but he felt the absolute necessity of something like parity of rank between the contracting parties to secure happiness in marriage. The daughter of a merchant, even though unfortunate, was neither so much inferior nor superior to the son of a country clergyman as to make the inequality of station seriously objectionable; and in Anne, Dr. Mead persuaded himself he perceived qualities and feelings calculated to sweeten the draught of life, and which would worthily adorn the partner of his future days. In his conduct in this affair there was nothing of romance or violence of passion. Indeed his love was what a romantic girl would consider extremely unsatisfactory—it was rational esteem founded upon conviction; and their intercourse was so unmingled with any of those flights in which such persons as Miss Englefield and Mr. Rush-ton were perpetually engaged, that, when the

doctor made his declaration, it seemed as if it were the inevitable consequence of their constant association ; and Anne's acceptance of his offer, under the sanction of her delighted mother, was as calm and collected as if it were not the great deciding event of her life, and one which could only be looked upon as the happiest that had ever yet occurred in it.

It may be that this calmness, and her apparent unconsciousness of the wonderful importance of the match in a worldly point of view, might have arisen in some degree from the recollection which never fades from woman's mind, of her first love. Unworthy as he had proved himself, and changed so much from his former self, he still perhaps retained some hold on the heart he had betrayed, and would with callous indifference have broken : — these recollections might have had their share in producing the effects which, although Mead appeared perfectly satisfied with the gentleness of Anne's conduct, were by no means agreeable to her mother, whose gratitude to Providence for what had occurred was unbounded.

There was another point which was necessarily to be brought under discussion, to which Anne felt a diffidence and difficulty in alluding—the position of her brother George in society, and his close connexion with the doctor's heartless rival. These matters, interwoven as they were with the probable renewal of her acquaintance with Brag when his sister should return to England, and the consciousness that she had committed herself by an acknowledgment of her attachment to him, preyed upon her spirits, and the brightness of her present prospects was marred by clouds, which, like the few existing professors of Nauscopy, she could behold in the far distance before they were visible to ordinary eyes. To the suspense in which the heart and mind are constantly kept by a protracted anticipation of coming evils, which, however remote, are sure to come, poor Anne, it must be owned, was a victim, and her efforts to rally from it were altogether unavailing.

We have all felt that the most serious ills, or the most painful discussions, which have

occurred to us, or in which we have been engaged, have, when they actually arrived, turned out not half so serious or so painful as we have expected; and upon this principle Anne devoutly prayed that the *denouement*, which she regarded with so much anxiety and dread, should arrive speedily. Her mother, to whom she imparted so much of her uneasiness as related to the announcement to her future husband of her brother's rank in the army, assured her that nothing was to be apprehended on that score; that a man who had selected as a wife, the daughter of a distressed and needy woman, would not shrink from the fulfilment of his pledge to her, because her brother had been compelled to enter an honourable service even in its lowest grade.

Mrs. Brown was a woman of good sense, but whatever Mead's character and disposition might be, there *is*, in point of fact, as far as worldly matters go, a wide difference in the feelings of a man towards the female and male connexions of a family: a pretty milliner, or a smart actress, is a most agreeable *pro tempore* companion;

and there is not a man who would object to take either, to any of the *guinguettes* round town, in the bright blaze of sunshine to participate in the enjoyments of a Richmond stroll, or a Greenwich fish-dinner; but it would be rather a difficult matter to induce the same person to drive Jack Twigg, the brother of the one—or row Bill Bott, the father of the other—to either of those cockney Elysiums. The doctor was everything that could be amiable and generous, but the fact that the real nature of George's service had never been imparted to him, but, on the contrary, the discussion had been carefully avoided, might of itself add to the objections which he might feel to having, by way of brother-in-law, a hard-fisted sergeant of a marching regiment.

How he eventually was made acquainted with the facts, and what was the result of his knowledge of them as affecting his subsequent proceedings, the reader is soon destined to know: but as they are rather prominent features of our little history, it is right they should have a chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW days had only elapsed since the final arrangement of Anne's marriage, when the anxiety and worry by which she was annoyed in not having explicitly told her future husband her brother's history were terminated in a manner certainly neither expected nor anticipated by her.

It was evening when the doctor made his appearance at the Tusculum, evidently excited—that is to say, rather more animated than usual—full of something which he was anxious to impart, and still more desirous of imparting without flurrying his companions:—to use a homely phrase, he had a good deal to say, but did not know exactly how to begin.

The difficulty he felt, arose from two sources:—the first cause of his embarrassment was, the

consciousness that what he had to communicate could not fail, with all his caution, to awaken a combination of feelings in the minds of his hearers, the physical effect of which upon the constitution of the elder one he anticipated with some apprehension ; and the other originated in the feeling that he was about to avow himself fully acquainted with every particular concerning a member of the family to which he was about to ally himself, whose name had scarcely ever been mentioned, and whose history had never been touched on.

“ I have news for you, ladies,” said Mead, after having talked upon some indifferent subjects, “ which will surprise you ; but I shall not tell you one word until you have promised me to behave calmly and temperately when I have told my story.”

“ News for *us* !” said Mrs. Brown.

“ News from afar,” said the doctor.

The blood rushed into Anne’s cheeks. She was assured whence, and whence only, news from afar could come to *them* — Mead had heard of her brother—of the brother of whose position in

society she had avoided the mention—he knew it all—and not from her ! She felt humiliated and abashed, and almost shuddered at the reflection that from mistaken pride,—unaccountable in a character like hers,—she had left the developement of the whole family history to chance, by which, Mead had become possessed of every particular, and was of course convinced that Anne, with all her good qualities, was not entirely ingenuous. As it happened, the circumstances of the case were such as not to give that colouring to her conduct ; but, on the contrary, to lead the doctor to admire the diffidence and modesty of both mother and daughter in not having spoken much more of such a son and brother.

“ Your son ” — said Mead.

“ I knew it must be poor George ! ” exclaimed Anne.

“ Your son is expected home almost immediately,” said the doctor.

“ Thank God ! ” said Mrs. Brown : “ he is alive then and safe. Three years have passed since the date of his last letter.”

“ Dear, dear George !” said Anne,— her joy still clouded by her self-condemnation.

“ When; my dear doctor,” said Mrs. Brown, “ may we expect him ? — and how have you heard this news ?”

“ Promise me, both of you,” said Mead, “ to hear what I have to say calmly, and I will tell you all. You have no reason for agitation; the news I bring is good — excellent ! Now, recollect—no agitation——he is in England !”

A flood of tears from the two listeners followed this announcement. I am not sure that the eyes of the narrator were quite dry.

“ Heaven be praised !” sobbed Mrs. Brown ; “ I shall see my dear, dear boy once more !”

Anne remained mute, and motionless, and weeping.

“ Nay, ladies,” continued Mead, “ I have seen him — have conversed with him, — and only succeeded by pointing out the absolute necessity of forbearance, in hindering his coming with me : — to-morrow you will clasp him to your hearts.”

Had not the one reproach rankled in Anne’s

mind, her happiness would have been as perfect as her mother's: as it was, she felt she would give the world to enquire more about him—about his wife—his family—his circumstances; but she was tongue-tied.

“Is he well?” said his mother—“and is his wife with him?”

“She is,” said Mead—“I have seen *her* too.”

Another pang thrilled through Anne's heart:—that wife was the sister of the man to whom she had herself been betrothed! The mother and daughter exchanged a look;—it was full of meaning, but incomprehensible to Mead.

“I suppose she must be much altered,” said Mrs. Brown; “of that, however, *you* can be no judge, not having known her before she went abroad.”

“She is a very lovely creature,” said Mead; and observing a sudden change in the expression of Anne's countenance, he added—“not that I mean to make anybody jealous.”

Anne coloured: she felt that they were travelling over mined ground:—that the most

natural thing in the world for George to have done when he found out the doctor, was to make some allusion to the brother of his wife with reference to his sister; and she began to worry herself into the belief that the whole history of the Brag affair had been detailed to her affianced lover, and that he was merely serpentineing his way to the part of the details at which he might terminate his connexion with them altogether.

“ I never saw a sweeter expression of countenance !” continued Mead. “ Her manners are perfect : in fact, nothing but a constant intercourse with the best society can give that sort of unconscious ease and gracefulness which seem inherent, and whose greatest charm is the total absence of effort or affectation.”

Anne heard, and silently repeated to herself the words, “ constant intercourse with the best society,” and her thoughts flew like lightning to the back parlour behind the shop, the dangling candles in front, the respectable Brag defunct, and his widow still extant ; and the result of these hasty reminiscences was a con-

firmation of her belief that Mead was proceeding in an ironical strain, utterly at variance as it was with the general simplicity and amiability of his character, in order eventually to explode the whole affair, indignant at the treatment he had experienced, and disgusted with the connexion he had so nearly made.

“Why,” said Mrs. Brown—and Anne would have given worlds that she had said nothing,—“she was always a smart, clever girl, and, I suppose, time has improved her into what she is.”

“Her natural genius,” said Mead, “which, from some drawings I saw of hers, views of different parts of India, is evidently first-rate, has been—at least so your son told me—wonderfully improved by a residence in Italy, where art is so generally cultivated and understood; and her father, who, he says, was devoted to her, indulged her in a wish to reside upon the Continent for three years before his appointment.”

The mother and daughter again exchanged looks. It became a doubt in both their minds whether Dr. Mead was suddenly seized with

madness, or whether their dear George had caught the infection from the Brag family, and had been imposing on him in the most outrageous manner.

“I never heard of my daughter-in-law’s having been abroad,” said Mrs. Brown.

“She never could have been,” said Anne.

“All I know is this,” said Mead :—“a gentleman called upon me about one o’clock to-day. He sent in his card, and, upon seeing his name, it struck me that it must be your George, whom I had heard you occasionally mention. I had remarked that you did not speak much of him, and, as there are secrets in all families, I apprehended, although you never hinted it, that there might exist some disagreement amongst you with which I could have no concern whatever ; still the similarity of name excited the opinion that it might be *him*. I immediately received him in preference to my waiting patients. He told me that as soon as he and his wife arrived in town, he proceeded to Walworth, where the people of the house directed him to me, as knowing all about you.

Our conversation grew more and more interesting; and having, evidently to his surprise, and, I flatter myself, not a disagreeable one, told him the nature of my engagement to dear Anne, he insisted on accompanying me hither to clasp you in his arms. I positively refused that, and, by way of an intermediate bargain, he begged me the moment I had despatched my professional business to call upon him and his wife at Mivart's Hotel, where they have taken rooms. I did so, was introduced, and, as I have told you, am quite delighted with both of them."

"Mivart's Hotel!—taken rooms!"—another look was exchanged.

"Did he tell you," said Mrs. Brown, "whether he had any family?"

"I think he said one boy," replied Mead: "however, he will be here in the morning. I am not sure whether your daughter-in-law will come with him. She is in rather delicate health; and the journey from Falmouth, where they landed, coming immediately on a fortnight's bad weather in the chops of the Chan-

nel, after a long voyage, is something formidable to a person who, like her, has been used to all the luxuries of life."

Another look,—and an extra one from Anne, who looked at Mead to see whether there were any visible alteration in his countenance; for all he said was perfectly incomprehensible to her—if *he* were sane and rational.

"Did she," said Anne, particularly anxious to discover the extent of her communication as to her brother's engagement, as it might be called, with herself—"did she say anything about her brother?"

"Brother!" said Mead; "no, my dear Anne; George, your brother, and my future brother-in-law, I hope," (Anne blushed again,) "told me she was an only child."

"Did he?" said Mrs. Brown.

"An only child!" said Anne—and they were both more mystified than ever. Anne, however, who was more feelingly alive to the actual position of her brother, ventured a little farther: "Has George," said she, "obtained any promotion since we heard from him?"

“That,” said Mead, “is a question I cannot very satisfactorily answer. His card was a written one, and the name ‘Mr. Brown.’ As I before told you, my dear Anne, the name itself was enough for me.”

This little speech tended very considerably to calm poor Anne’s doubts and fears. Whatever had occurred, it was clear that neither George nor Kate had touched upon the subject of her former engagement, and she began to take courage and feel more at ease than she had been during the earlier part of the conversation.

Mrs. Brown’s delight at the prospect of again seeing her son was not a little qualified by the mystification which Mead’s account of him and his wife involved, and she longed for bed-time, in order to talk over the circumstances with her daughter. Her confidence in George’s veracity rendered her suspicious of the doctor’s accuracy; and out of both she established an idea that the Mr. Brown of whom they had been talking must be neither more nor less than some dashing swindler, who proposed to cheat the doctor,

or somebody else, by pretending a relationship to the family with which he was about to connect himself.

Of course, so long as the conversation lasted, George and his wife were the leading subjects of it ; not that the doubts and surmises of the ladies were at all calmed or diminished by hearing Mead detail the particulars of a visit paid to Mr. Brown, during the time he was at the hotel, by one of the most fashionable coachmakers in town, to receive Mrs. Brown's orders with regard to a carriage which was to be put in hand immediately, and finished as soon as possible.

At last the trio separated for the night, the doctor well pleased to have found in his brother-in-law a gentleman so agreeable and highly respectable, but wondering more than ever that he should have suffered his mother and sister to exist in the manner they were living at Walworth, and where, had it not been for the accidental circumstance of Anne's application to him, they would in all probability have been living still ; and coupling these matters with the looks which he could not at length fail to see Mrs.

Brown and her daughter interchange, he unsettled his mind into a belief that there must be some mystery in the affair, of which he should like to be master.

“ My dear Anne,” said Mrs. Brown, as she threw herself into the armed chair in her bed-chamber, “ what on earth can all this mean? Delighted as I am at the prospect of so soon seeing my boy, I am astounded and astonished at what Mead tells us. What can have happened to George, to induce him to talk and act as he represents him to have done this morning?”

“ I,” said Miss Brown, “ cannot comprehend it. But I am even more surprised at what he has *not* said to Robert, than at what he *has*. He may have made money; he may be able to live at an expensive hotel; and he may be able to let Kate have a carriage: but one would have thought one of his first enquiries would have been after his brother-in-law. Now, of Jack, it is clear he never spoke; for if he had, and before Robert had told him all, the chances are”—(here her voice faltered

a little) — “ *my* name would have been mentioned too.”

“ My dear child,” said Mrs. Brown, “ how should George afford any of the luxuries of which Mead speaks? — besides, knowing, as I do, the tenderness of his affection, and the generosity of his heart, do you think, if he had acquired anything like the property which this person seems to possess, that we should have been forgotten? No, no! — rely upon it, there is some great mistake in the business somewhere. George would never have left his mother and sister to work for their bread, if he had had the means of putting them at their ease.”

“ Besides,” said Anne, “ when the whole of the conversation of *this* Mr. Brown with Robert is put together, it does not appear to contain one word in allusion to our family concerns. It is true, Mr. Brown went to Walworth, and was referred to Robert by Mrs. Hutchins; but, except a simple enquiry after our health, he seems to have made no allusion whatever to anything that happened either before his departure or during his absence. My belief is,

like yours, that it is somebody who for some purpose has thought fit to personate George, although, to be sure, it would be difficult to conjecture for what."

"I would rather it were anything," said Mrs. Brown, "than that my once honourable, high-minded boy should have endeavoured to impose upon Mead with such extraordinary falsehoods as those which it appears he must have told, if it be him."

"Besides," said Anne, who grew energetic and eloquent as she proceeded, "Kate never *could* draw; the things she took home from school were all done by the drawing-master: and as for the Continent, she never was even as far as Calais."

"It seems to me, Anne," said the matron, "to be one tissue of falsehood and pretension from beginning to end."

In this sort of condemnatory strain did Mrs. Brown and her daughter converse, till, twelve o'clock striking, they considered it proper to part for the night, in order to indulge themselves with a separate reconsideration of the whole affair.

The morning came—breakfast was eaten :—the doctor departed as usual for town, and the ladies began to count the minutes until George, or the person who had assumed his name, should make his appearance. At length the happy moment came ; the old lady clasped her son to her heart, and the young one clung round the neck of her brother. GEORGE IT WAS—that was clear ; and although his features had become somewhat sharpened by time, and his complexion was mellowed into a durable brown by the effects of the climate, he was not so much altered as might have been expected.

“ Well, my dear mother,” said George, as soon as he could collect himself sufficiently to speak, “ what gratitude do we not owe to Providence ! As far as Anne is concerned, I am delighted with her choice : I wanted nothing but her comfortable establishment in life to make me perfectly happy.”

“ And how is your wife, George ?” said his mother ; “ our doctor says she is in delicate health.”

“ She is, I am sorry to say, a sad invalid,”

said George. "I hope, however, her native climate, unfavourable as it is to foreigners, may restore her. She was very anxious to come with me to-day, but she really is not strong enough to bear even so short an excursion."

"We have seen scarcely anything of Brag since you went," said Mrs. Brown, anxious as much as possible to soften down his infamous conduct, out of respect to the feelings of his blameless sister.

"I rejoice to hear it," said George. "I trust I never may have the misfortune of seeing him again."

"But I suppose," said Anne, who was always for peace-making, "you *will* see him for the sake of my sister-in-law?"

"I don't imagine," said Mr. Brown, "that your sister-in-law is very likely to see much of *him*. In fact," continued he, "I think, when she gets strong enough, we shall in all probability go to the Continent, unless perhaps I should stop a month or two in England for a little shooting."

Here the ladies exchanged looks of a similar character to those of the night before.

“To be sure,” continued he, “whatever miseries and unhappinesses I may have undergone since we parted, my career has been one of the most extraordinary, and most prosperous, that man ever ran. How I have deserved such blessings, I know not.”

“What rank have you now in the army, George?” said his mother.

“Army!” said her son; “you know I have left the army.”

“Left it!” exclaimed the old lady, more confirmed than ever in the suspicion that something was wrong somewhere and somehow: — “why, then, how do you live?”

“How! — as a man of fortune should live,” said George, — “upon my property.”

“My dear George,” said Anne, “what *are* you talking of?”

“Nothing but what you know of,” replied he.

“We know of nothing, my dear boy,” said Mrs. Brown, “but of your having been made clerk to Sir Cadwallader Adamthwaite’s secretary.”

“Why, my dear mother,” said George, “I

never made a remittance to you without writing fully upon all my affairs."

"Remittance!" said Mrs. Brown.

"Letters!" said Anne — "my dear brother, we have not received a line from you for upwards of three years; and, during all our distresses, your silence caused perhaps the keenest pang of all."

"Distresses!" exclaimed George—"why this—what—three years!—there have been roguery and robbery here! From the moment my fortunes changed, I regularly remitted you as much as my means would afford; and although wondering never to have heard from you through the agent whom I directed to forward my letters to you, and to receive any you chose to trust to his care, I felt assured by his answers that your silence was a matter of choice; and, ascertaining through him that you were both well, contented myself with fulfilling my duty and gratifying my inclinations, without waiting for reply or acknowledgment. The truth will be easily discovered. This very agent, I find on my arrival here, has failed, and is recently

dead ; I have, of course, had no time to investigate his affairs, but I very much fear I shall be an eventual loser of four or five thousand pounds by him."

Here the ladies looked at each other again. Anne had read in some book something about shaking the pagoda tree in India, but it seemed as if her brother must have picked it clean.

" Three years !" said George — " why then you know nothing of the leading events of my life—of the entire change in my circumstances."

" I see you are in mourning, George," said Anne, who did not know how to ask for whom ?

" Yes," said George, " I am sorry to say I am — for my father-in-law ; a more generous-hearted, noble-minded man, never lived."

" In mourning for poor Mr. Brag, now !" said his mother.

" Brag !" said George. — " I sicken at the very name."

" Oh, George," said Anne, " consider Kate !"

" Kate !" exclaimed Brown, turning deadly pale — " Kate ! — Oh ! Anne, it must be more

than three years since you got any of my letters. — Lost, wretched woman !”

“ Lost !” said Anne — “ why, is not she at the hotel ?”

“ In her grave !” said George, “ a grave which closed upon a life of wantonness and disgrace.”

“ Then you are married again ?” said Anne.

In answer to this question, it seems better to adopt the narrative style, inasmuch as many circumstances had occurred during the period of George’s involuntary cessation of correspondence with his mother, which it would be difficult for him personally to describe or explain.

The reader has traced the career of Mr. George Brown up to the point of his becoming clerk to the military secretary of Sir Cadwallader Adamthwaite. His readiness, activity, and assiduity, were so remarkable, that the general, who was one of the kindest-hearted men upon the face of the earth, took the trouble to ascertain the particulars of his history ; and finding him to be in every essential point a gentleman, resolved on procuring him a commission in the army, which he did ; and when it

was obtained, and George appointed, the clerk was dignified into assistant military secretary, and the assistant military secretary became one of the general's family.

It was during a year or fourteen months of probation before the arrival of his commission, that Mrs. George Brown (*née* Brag) began to evince very strong symptoms of a propensity, which even the thirst produced by a hot climate cannot justify in one of the "fair sex," as her brother would call them; and upon more occasions than one, George, on his return from head-quarters, found her in a state which, as authors say who are not able to depict what they wish, "may be better imagined than described." It rarely happens that when this vice exists in woman, it is the only one to which she sooner or later addicts herself. Grown reckless by habitual intemperance, her temper became violent; and impatient of rebuke, she taxed her husband with cruelty and inhumanity for merely remonstrating upon conduct so disgraceful to herself, and which must be so injurious to him. The most depraved women, however, find

admirers, and Mrs. Brown, degraded as she was, found hers. The justification she attempted to plead for the irregularity of her life was, the delusion which had been practised upon her by George as to the place she was to occupy in the world ; that her husband's rank, of course, excluded her from good society, such as, she said, " she had always been used to : " and, in short, having awakened from a dream of girlish love, she bitterly repented of the step she had taken, and became careless of everything but the gratification of her worst propensities.

This career did not last long. It would be neither pleasant nor profitable to enter into the particulars of her unfortunate case ; a few months' intemperance brought her life to its close, and left George a widower, commiserated by his comrades rather for the sufferings he had undergone, than for the loss he had sustained. All these circumstances he had detailed in his missing letters to his mother, in one of which he had also communicated the intelligence of his wife's death to her surviving parent ; but, with great goodness of heart and tender-

ness of feeling, avoiding all mention of the unhappy circumstances in which she died.

If George and Kate had given themselves time to consider the step which they unfortunately took, and had not been blinded by youthful love, they could have anticipated nothing but evil from such a marriage. Kate was evidently labouring under the belief that George was an officer; and the question whether his rank would enable her to live with people such as she had been accustomed to visit and receive, never entered her mind. She first began to feel her difficulties when she embarked on board the ship which was to take them to India; but even *there* the superiority of her manners induced a special attention to her, and infinitely better accommodation was contrived for her than she had any *right* to: in short, from the moment they were fairly launched in the world, and she saw the path she had chosen, she became fretful and irritable, her pride wounded by finding herself unable to speak to, or associate with the wives of the officers with whom she was domesticated, and her vanity hurt by

being permitted to stand in the verandah of the mess-room, *to look in and see* the company dancing when the officers gave a ball.

That it *was* humiliating and provoking nobody can deny, but she ought to have calculated upon such evils before she married ; that is, if she knew enough of “ the service ” to enable her to appreciate the relative value of its different ranks : however, it is not my province to reason upon the wisdom or propriety of her early proceedings. Her ruin and fall may be fairly traced to her first great act of filial disobedience ; and her fate adds another to the numerous instances already upon record, of the ill-success of runaway matches.

The day on which Ensign Brown made his first appearance in Sir Cadwallader Adamthwaite’s drawing-room, was a most important era of his life ; and when he found himself warmly received by the general, and presented *pro formâ* to his daughter, who, of course, knew him perfectly well by sight, he could not restrain a feeling of regret that his unfortunate wife had not so conducted herself through what

he admitted to have been a trial, that she might have overcome all the hardships she had previously endured, and have enjoyed the satisfaction of finding herself placed by her husband's promotion, in society from which her girlish thoughtlessness had excluded her.

Sir Cadwallader's kind act of justice to the merits of Ensign Brown gave general satisfaction, and met with universal approbation; and he was welcomed to the mess of his regiment with the most unequivocal marks of friendship and esteem. His official avocations prevented his doing regimental duty, and his evenings were occupied in a participation in the pleasures of Sir Cadwallader's hospitable mansion.

It might displease the reader if I were to doubt that he anticipates the result of this introduction of the ensign into the house of the general. He most probably guesses rightly; but as there *are* circumstances which render the case somewhat dissimilar from most others, he must be told the particulars.

Ellen Adamthwaite, Sir Cadwallader's daughter, was the beloved of his heart. Her mother

had died young — a mother from whom Sir Cadwallader had received, besides the most endearing proofs of constancy and affection, the vast fortune which he possessed, and which enabled him to support *en prince* the highest offices, to which his noble profession and his gallant conduct had led him. Upon Ellen—the dear, the gentle Ellen—the love, the devotion, which once was her mother's due, devolved at her mother's death: and although Ellen, who was everything father could desire, could not but feel conscious of her power over him, she was the least presuming of daughters, the most gentle, and most amiable of girls.

When Sir Cadwallader was offered the commandership-in-chief and second seat in council at the presidency to which he was attached, he accepted it, upon the chivalrous feeling of the greatest soldier, not only of the day, but of the land we live in—that he was the King's servant, and equally bound to obey his commands in the highest and lowest of offices; and although possessed of wealth which rendered the appointment pecuniarily unimportant, he readily

relinquished his domestic ease and comfort for the more *negatively* active domination over an Oriental army.

While holding this appointment, his constant endeavour appeared to be, to make everybody happy around him. There was nothing in the state of the country which seemed to require any of the austerity of military discipline; and the routine duty, although comprehending an extensive range, was not that which required the vigilance and activity of war. He "took the thing easy" himself, and his greatest pleasure was to see everybody subordinate to himself do exactly the same. He never grumbled if he saw men in "mufti" or "white jackets;" desired every man to "make himself comfortable" when he came to dinner; and, in short, was about the best-natured being that ever melted under an Indian sun.

That he had taken a great fancy to Brown was clear. Major Mopes, whose death-like countenance never relaxed into a smile, but of whom Sir Cadwallader had the highest opinion, inasmuch as he saved His Excellency all

the trouble, not only of writing but of thinking, had spoken very highly of George, and enlarged upon the meritorious course he had pursued in entering the army, as he had done, in order to relieve his mother, who *had been* in such a different position in society, from all charge for his support. This recommendation led Sir Cadwallader to talk to him : he found him well-informed, well-read, intelligent, and, in fact, a gentleman. The prepossession thus created, and which went to the extent of procuring him the commission, extended further, and the only phrase—it is a simple one, and best suits the general's feeling, is,—“ he liked him.”

How often such prepossessions take hold of people, and how seldom are they erroneous ! —how unaccountable are the sympathies by which such prepossessions are created ! The moment Sir Cadwallader heard George's story, and received the testimonials of his merit and ability, he resolved to serve him,—and, in fact, to restore him to his place in society as a gentleman, which he pronounced him to be to his daughter, while he was yet his secretary's

clerk, as he was sitting with her in the windward varhandah smoking his chilum.

Ellen Adamthwaite, who, of course, saw George almost every day, accidentally, or perhaps incidentally, could not help participating in the interest which her father took in his fate, especially as the history of his wife's misconduct and death were matters of notoriety in the family, from Major Mopes's frequent recurrence to the circumstance of their elopement from England,—and the commiserating “What a pity it is that nothing can be done to reclaim a person originally so respectable!” which was so often on his lips.

When George became by royal authority a gentleman, and Ellen found she might look at him, and even speak to him, without any indecorum, she certainly felt more than ever the hardship of his case while doing the duty which his filial affection had imposed upon him, even regretting, as he did himself, the cause which, no doubt, was truly assigned for his wife's distressing dereliction from every religious, moral, and social duty.

Nothing more readily excites an interest in a woman's heart than a bit of the romance of real life. George, selected by her kind-hearted father for favour and promotion, was brought into her society the son of a ruined merchant, who had received the education of a gentleman, and had been educated in the expectation of succeeding to his father's wealth. He enters the army as a private soldier, to relieve his mother from the burthen of maintaining him, and he elopes with a girl who is desperately in love with him. In his past life, therefore, there appeared a combination of events, sufficiently romantic to awaken a particular feeling towards him ; and it was not many days after his domestication at the general's, before Ellen found her eyes resting upon his intelligent countenance much oftener than upon any other object in the room.

There was a manly modesty in George's manner — a sort of consciousness of what he might have been, of what he had been, and yet, of what he *was*, which was peculiarly conciliating. Sir Cadwallader lost no opportunity of bring-

ing him forward. It seemed, indeed, to be his study to make him appear to the best possible advantage in company, in order, as it might be thought, to justify the partiality he had evinced for him, and the good opinion he entertained of him.

In London the circle is so extensive, that although some hundred or two people whisper, and look wise, and nod and wink at each other when a flirtation becomes a little too evident, there are seven or eight hundred others to whom it is a matter of no interest ; and, moreover, whatever people think, they keep their thoughts as far distant as possible from the flirts themselves. Within the confined ring-fence of an Indian presidency, the slightest movement of that nature at head-quarters creates a universal sensation ; all the worst passions of mankind are concentrated and pemmican'd in a little community of that sort ; envy and jealousy assume the garb of friendship and esteem ; and some miserable wretch, whose hatred towards one of the parties has been engendered or fostered by the remembrance of a slight or

neglect, thinks it a duty he owes to so excellent a man as his Excellency the commander-in-chief, to mention to him what people say about his daughter and Mr. Somebody, whose society and conversation she happens to prefer to that of the considerate friend of her father.

Two months had not flown over George's head in his new capacity before the whole tribe were in motion. "To be sure," says one, "Sir Cadwallader is an extraordinary man:—he can't but see it." "Perhaps he does not object to it," says another. "La!" cries a third: "what! let his daughter marry a man from the ranks!" "Hush!" says a fourth—"the less we say about *that* the better: rose from the ranks himself." "Flogged at Chat-ham for stealing a cock turkey," says a fifth. "Hush!" says a sixth, "here comes his Excellency." Out turns the guard—ruffle goes the drum—rattledum slap go the muskets—and his Excellency is immediately surrounded by the little group in the full exercise of Koo-too-ism, who, the moment before, were exercising their historical and biographical faculties in

commenting upon the folly of his Excellency's conduct, and in descanting upon the obscurity of his Excellency's birth.

That Ellen and George were somehow more paired off together, than any other two of the party, is most certain. In her conversation with him she did not disguise her esteem and regard for his good qualities, which made themselves evident upon every possible occasion; while *he*, regarding her as a superior being, felt that sort of admiration which wise men say is not compatible with tenderness. The whole economy of love, however, is so intricate, so perplexing, so mysterious, and so perilous, that there exists no rule throughout the whole system without an exception.

George once or twice thought that Miss Adamthwaite looked more than she said; and though he had not sufficiently considered the matter even to assure himself that of all girls in the world she was the very last for whom he ought to encourage an affection, a word dropped by one of his friends on the staff, suddenly brought to his mind the real position in

which he was placed. Then it was he taxed himself with selfishness in seeking her society ; then it was he resolved to alienate himself from the delight which her conversation and accomplishments afforded him :—he would mix more generally in society ; he would dine abroad whenever he could, and would go out immediately after his official business was over ; he would not go to tiffin, nor walk for an hour or two with Ellen in the varhandah : in short, he would not endanger her peace or comfort by giving occasion for remarks, which although wholly without foundation, might wound her feelings or injure her reputation.

It was not till the moment he made these resolutions that the real state of his heart became known to himself. It was only *then* he discovered that he could not act upon his own determination. When tiffin was announced the next day, Sir Cadwallader forced him to stay and partake of it — desired his daughter to lay *her* commands upon him :—then, by his Excellency's orders, they played chess together,—and then came in some visitors

— George, of course, could not leave *them* : — and then—and then—in fact, the very first day after *that* in which he had decided upon a total alteration in his proceedings, was passed precisely as the thirty or forty preceding days had been passed.

It is a generally admitted axiom, that “ abstinence is less difficult than moderation;” and so it seems thought George: for failing in his project of philosophically decreasing his happiness gradually, he came to the resolution of abandoning it altogether.

The project George meditated to carry this “ stern resolve” into execution, was one which did honour to his heart; but it required a confederate, and that very circumstance enhanced its difficulty. The moment he had ascertained the real state of his feelings, he more attentively — perhaps tenderly would be a better word — watched the dear girl to whom he was devoted. It was too true: — looks and actions which he had attributed to friendship, or even to a compliance with her father’s wishes, now that he had ventured to think of love, bore a

totally different character. Whatever dress he had accidentally praised, Ellen more constantly wore; the flower he preferred was always in her bosom; the songs he loved to hear, she sang; and opinions which he had once expressed, she adopted for her own.

Oh! those who have never felt the tender, galling anxiety of a state like this, cannot appreciate George's feelings during the week after he had made the discovery of his real position. What had he done?—gained the affections of his benefactor's daughter! It was not vanity that suggested the truth: the word once spoken that gave *that* turn to his thoughts, decided it. The fascination was over him—he was conscious that he was beloved. How he acted under this impression remains to be seen.

CHAPTER IX.

AMONGST his friends—for of a few associates he had many—the friend George fixed upon as the one to aid him in his rescue from the commission of what he considered the damning crime of ingratitude, was the surgeon of his own regiment—a man of sense and shrewdness, and one who was professionally taciturn upon subjects not intended for general conversation:—to him, after mature deliberation, George proceeded, and having begged his private ear, told him he wanted his immediate aid.

“What!—a duel?” said Dr. Short.

“No, my dear doctor,” said George, “I am ill—seriously ill. I have a constant pain in my side. I ought not to stay here. I must resign my assistant-secretaryship and go home for my health. I want a sick certificate.”

“Umph!” said Short — “I see — yes — on which side is the pain — left — right?”

“Intensely severe on the right side,” said George. “I cannot lift my arm perpendicularly without feeling the most excruciating torture.”

“Umph!” said the doctor. “You know what Abernethy said upon that point to the old woman who said the same thing to *him* — eh! — What a fool you must be to try! — eh!”

“I assure you, doctor, mine is no laughing matter,” said George.

“Let’s see your tongue. Umph! — clean as a whistle, and red as beet-root. Won’t do — eh! No tricks upon travellers — no case of liver. Can’t do what you want — or what you don’t want. Did Sir Cadwallader send you to me?”

“No, indeed,” said George, “no human being is aware of my visit to you.”

“Why did you make a secret of it, eh?” said Short. “Every man has a liver; every liver is subject to disease. What’s the use of mystery?”

“ I know of no mystery,” said George.

“ Won’t do, Mr. Assistant-secretary,” said Short. “ A surgeon ought to have an eagle’s eye, a lion’s heart, and a lady’s hand. Cannot say I have all those qualities ; but as far as the eye goes, I think, I can see as far as my neighbours—eh !”

“ I don’t know what you should make a merit of seeing,” said George. “ I have no disguises—I wish to be candid with you.”

“ Ah !” said Short, “ now I see. You want to tell me you have nothing the matter with you : and yet you want me to give you a sick certificate—eh !—that ’s it—umph !”

“ My dear doctor,” said George, “ I believe you *do* know something of my feelings, for you certainly have guessed my wishes. I am *not* ill, —at least in body ; but I may be saved from being ill in body, in mind, in reputation, and in conscience, if you will but grant your fiat for shipping me to England.”

“ I know,” said Short, “ you are as safe in *my* care as a baby on her mother’s bosom :—but I say—those grey eyes and black eyelashes

are the devil!—aren't they?—umph!—sweet creature! Come, no nonsense, or you get no certificate. You know it is all mighty fine your coming to me, looking as mysterious as a playhouse conspirator: everybody here, except your two selves, and perhaps Sir Cad. knows the whole story."

"What story?" said George:—"no word has ever passed my lips—"

"No: but a great many have passed the lips of other people," said Short. "As for your own words, they are what we call superfluous—the eyes have it—eh!—umph!"

"What you say, doctor," said George, "makes me miserable."

"Very!" said Short. "I know—it makes every man miserable to have gained the affections of a charming, amiable girl, with a hundred and fifty thousand pounds:—it is quite a calamity! Poor Mr. Assistant-secretary!—you can't think how I pity you!"

"Doctor, this is no joking matter," said George. "It is useless, I perceive, to attempt disguise with *you*: you have seen or heard

what I never suspected could have been even remarkable. If I wished your assistance upon this point when I came into this room, it is ten thousand times more desirable to me now."

"Umph!" said Short. "Why?"

"Why!" exclaimed George: — "we have so suddenly and deeply plunged into this discussion; you assume so much, and I have such perfect faith and confidence in you, that—"

"You are good enough to propose telling me what I know already," interrupted Short.

"No, not what you know already," said George, "but what my resolution is. The general, in the outset of my career here, befriended me, espoused my cause, restored me to society, and made me what I am. I am admitted into his family, and I evince my gratitude to him for all his kindnesses by —"

"— By permitting his daughter to fall in love with you!" said Short: — "how can *you* help that?"

"If such should be the case," said George, "it is my duty instantly to quit this place."

"To be sure!" said Short — "and add to

all the other marks of your sense of the General's obligations by leaving his only darling child to break her heart."

"Do not talk in this way, doctor," said the assistant secretary, "it is I"—

"Pshaw!" said Short. "No nonsense: stay where you are—I'll give you no certificate."

"Then I must go without one," said George. "Private business in England"—

"Very private, indeed!" said Short. "I say, stay where you are."

"My dear friend," said George, "it is impossible! What you have told me now, in addition to a remark which I accidentally overheard, renders it imperatively necessary that I should go. It is the only favour I have ventured to ask of you, or of any man since I have been here: grant me the certificate, let me show it to Sir Cadwallader, and tear myself away from the only place in the world where I care to live."

"Oh!" said Short, putting his finger to his nose—"mutual, I see. Umph!"

"I did not say—"

“ Yes, you did,” said Short. “ How do you know Sir Cad. will let you go ?”

“ If he could,” said George, “ which for worlds I would not he should, even fancy what is passing in this room, he would —”

“ What !” said Short — “ do you think he does not know what is passing in your mind and that of Miss Ellen’s ?”

“ What *is* passing in our minds ?” asked George.

“ *Our* minds !” said Short — “ umph ! — that’s it — *our* minds ! The glorious *we* of literature is not more commanding than the ‘ our ’ of you two. Why, you are over head and ears in love with each other, and you cannot help showing it wherever you are. I know the symptoms, Mr. Assistant-secretary — have had the complaint myself : so has Sir Cad. — a great practitioner in *that* way : — d’ye think he is blind ?”

“ I know he is everything that is kind and good,” said George.

“ Well, then, perhaps his goodness and kind-

ness may go the length of wishing you to be his son-in-law," said Short.

"Impossible!" said George — "a creature he has made—"

"Umph!" said Short, — "don't see how that interferes—eh! You had better talk to *her* of your heart than to *me* of your liver. See what *he* says — or, if you don't like that, *I* will."

"Doctor!" said George, looking extremely fierce.

"I will," said Short; — "that is to say, I shall tell his Excellency officially that you have applied for a sick certificate; and, if you'll trust to me, I'll work it to the best advantage. If Sir Cad. is crusty, you shall have it. A pain in the side makes no show: — I can't tell whether you have a pain in your side or not. If he demur to your going, you shall be in excellent health; if he frown, and expresses a wish that way, you shall be shipped for Cheltenham in a fortnight."

“ I knew,” said George, “ you would be my friend.”

“ *I am* your friend,” said the doctor, “ therefore I want you to stop. You have enemies here as well as your betters. Your going would be a triumph to some half-dozen of the fellows who have been dangling after Miss Ellen for the last two years, and who have never got so much as a smile from her for their pains. No, no : mark me, Mr. Assistant-secretary ; — put the affair into my hands, and you shall have the sick certificate when *I* think you want it, and not before.”

George, it must be confessed, was incalculably surprised at the evident notoriety of an attachment of which he even fancied himself unconscious only a few days before. That the lookers-on see more than the players, is generally said, and here was a proof of the correctness of the saying : the very circumstance, however, of its having become a topic of general conversation strengthened, as we have seen, his determination to put an end to the scandal through the aid of his friend Short.

Had he not been bound to his military duty by military law, his retreat could have been easily managed ; but it was absolutely necessary that the very man from whom he wished to keep his motives for going, secret, should be the person, and the only person, who could dispense with his services, and grant him leave to put his plan into execution. As it was, he had only to trust to the doctor, whose proceedings he endeavoured to accelerate by pointing out to him the dangers of delay.

That he was not slow to act, George soon discovered. At dinner the next day Sir Cadwallader began to throw out hints that he was aware of George's intention of applying for the certificate, and in general terms censured the conduct of commanding officers who, by permitting themselves to be parties to a deception practised under the connivance of medical officers, committed themselves as accomplices to what, after all, however strong the phrase might sound, was little better than a deliberate fraud.

“ There 's jobbing all over the world,” said

his Excellency. "One is never safe. Any fellow that wants to shirk duty, makes friends with the doctor, and out comes a sick certificate. — What's the matter? — liver, to be sure! As Short says, 'Who can see a pain in the side?'"

Nobody spoke, because nobody exactly comprehended what his Excellency meant by this gratuitous observation, except George, who felt himself get extremely red in the face, — a very natural consequence of being talked *at* by a commander-in-chief. Ellen did not know to whom the observation referred, and looked round the table to see if any of the half-dozen guests were affected. Her look rested on George: their eyes met: they both became suddenly embarrassed, and Sir Cadwallader, who was good at a long shot, saw the glance and the response, which confirmed his suspicions, and decided his course of conduct.

The evening of this day was passed as agreeably as the evening before, but Ellen felt a difference in George's manner towards her: she

could scarcely define what it was, or how to account for it, and yet it somehow connected itself in her mind with her father's hypothetical observation at dinner. The guests departed, unregretted by either of the lovers, for so, unconsciously they were; and the party was reduced to a trio, composed of Sir Cadwallader, Ellen, and the assistant military secretary, who always lingered last of the throng, were it never so late.

“So,” said Sir Cadwallader, after a short pause, “I suppose, Mr. Brown, you felt the force of my little remark at dinner about sick certificates—eh! I hope you did—it was meant expressly for *you*.”

“Sir!” faltered George, anticipating the burst of displeasure which he was assured would follow this announcement.

“Yes, sir,” said his Excellency, “I understand you have been applying to Short for one of those melancholy testimonials of ill health, with a liver as sound as a roach, and the constitution of a ploughman.”

“ I assure your Excellency,” said George, “ that—I am not capable of deception upon any point:—I”—

“ I don’t know what you call deception, Mr. Brown,” said Sir Cadwallader; “ you are in good health, and you want the doctor to say you are sick, in order to quit your duty, and leave those who wish you well.”

Ellen, who began to feel extremely uneasy, and think her presence at such a scene was scarcely necessary, rose to depart.

“ Stay, Miss,” said the General — “ wait to hear what the gentleman has to say for himself.”

“ Really, papa,” said Ellen —

“ Really, Miss,” said the General — “ recollect I am commanding officer here: obey orders—sit you down, Miss. If you wished for leave of absence, Mr. Brown, why not have applied to me upon any fair ground? I hate shamming—eh!”

“ It is impossible,” said George, “ for me either to extenuate or explain my fault. It is

now known to you, sir :— there can be no difficulty in my going *now*.”

“ Why so, sir ?” said his Excellency.

“ You have exhibited my thoughtless — my ungrateful conduct, in its proper light,” said George : “ I cannot — indeed, I cannot remain longer with you.”

“ Suppose, sir, I cannot spare you,” said the General.

“ *My* services, sir,” said, or rather sobbed, George, “ are of no importance. I—”

“ That ’s matter of opinion,” said the General. “ But suppose *I* could manage without you — look at that young lady there — d’ye think *she* could spare you ?”

“ Oh, father !” said Ellen, who had sat trembling, and cold, and pale, during the conversation — “ I — don’t wish to interfere.”

“ You don’t !” said Sir Cadwallader — “ not interfere ! — you *do* wish to interfere, Miss. Lord bless your heart ! Elly, — haven’t I been young myself — eh ? No, no, you can’t cheat

me, cunning as you are :—you love this fellow, and he loves *you*.”

“ Father !” said Ellen.

Brown said nothing, but looked as if the world was on the point of annihilation.

“ Don’t contradict me, Elly,” said the General : “ where ’s the harm ?—where ’s the wrong ? When I heard George’s story, I was resolved to restore him to his proper place in society. I brought him into my house—into my family—and you have fallen in love with each other :—that ’s *my* affair. What then ? When I first knew your poor dear mother—the best of women and of wives !—what was I ?—a subaltern—the second son of a grocer at Gloucester. That was it, George—her mother was an heir-ess.—It sounds vain now—she fell in love with me, as I did with *her*. Well, I became possessed of her fortune ; *that* enabled me to purchase up in my profession : and if it had not been for that, I might have been now a hoary-headed lieutenant, or at best a captain of sixty-two, going through my daily ‘ Halt — left wheel,’ till my legs ached, instead of being

here a titled and decorated commander-in-chief. What has that dear woman to whom, under Providence, I owe everything, left me? — this girl — this child of my heart — the dearest — the only object of my affections! Half a glance tells me the state of the case.”

Ellen sat with her eyes fixed upon her father — George’s filled with tears — and what gem is brighter than a soldier’s tear so shed?

“Your conduct, sir,” said the General, “has done you the greatest honour. I appreciate it in the highest degree. But it won’t do — go you do not. If my Elly here is foolish enough to sympathize with her father in his predilections, and chooses to give her heart to an ensign without a shilling, what am I to do? — why, I’ll tell you, Mr. Brown, — religiously to realize whatever wishes she may entertain, for the sake of her beloved mother, and to take care that she does not make a foolish match with somebody not half so worthy of her.”

“My dear father,” said Ellen —

“*Tace, tace!* daughter of mine,” said Sir Cadwallader: — “don’t coquet, — don’t try to

deceive me. George, come here :—I am serious — take her hand, my good, excellent fellow ! You, who have been so admirable a son, cannot fail to make a good husband. This is my firm conviction.”

“ But, sir,” said Miss Adamthwaite, rising, “ I ”—

“ Oh !” said the general, “ you don’t like him ! Oh ! that, indeed, is a different affair :— then I am out in my reckoning, and there’s an end of the business.”

“ I didn’t say,” said Ellen, — and bursting into tears, she caught her father round the neck, and her head dropped upon his shoulder.

“ Come here, George,” said Sir Cadwallader — “ come here !—take her from me ! I know what she means : — she is your’s !” — “ I have neither chick nor child but this beloved one !” continued the General, who seemed to have caught the infection of weeping—“ I have nobody to please but her and myself. I think I have taken the surest method of doing both. I hate fine speeches — I don’t want thanks — so, my dear souls, God bless you both ! I’m

off — a syllable more from me would spoil it all. Talk over your own matters. Let these be the last tears I ever see you shed ; and to-morrow the babblers, and tattlers, and scandal-mongers, shall have the pleasure of hearing how the old general has been fool enough to give his only daughter to a penniless subaltern ! Good night ! my children—good night !”

Saying which, away went Sir Cadwallader, leaving the affianced lovers in a state of doubt whether they were awake or in a dream. George gazed on the blushing girl, even yet doubting whether she would fulfil her father’s intentions. Their eyes met :—those doubts vanished. Words were inadequate to the expression of their feelings :—he caught her in his arms and pressed her to his panting heart :—at which particular moment, Major Mopes, military secretary to his Excellency Sir Cadwallader Adamthwaite, and Captain Narcissus Fripps, his Excellency’s senior aide-du-camp, passed along the varhandah, into which all the doors and windows of his Excellency’s drawing-room opened.

This exhibition of mutual tenderness was, it must be admitted, something likely to make a commotion in a small circle. It, however, produced effects upon the military secretary and the aide-du-camp of a totally different character. Major Mopes, who had the highest opinion of George, and whose praises of his conduct had mainly conduced to create the interest which the general took in him, was horror-stricken. The idea that *he* had been chiefly instrumental in bringing him into Sir Cadwallader's family, the happiness of which he was now so evidently attempting to destroy, filled him with regret and indignation : all he hoped was, that his companion, Captain Fripps, might not have seen all that *he* had witnessed. He felt that if the secret were confined to himself, George might yet be saved ; that an appeal to his sense of honour and right feeling would induce him immediately to withdraw himself from a sphere so dangerous as that in which he now was moving, — little thinking that George had decided upon doing so a week before.

The aide-du-camp, however, *had* seen the sight—which so startled him, that he, like the major, but from very different motives, did not speak a word. At the end of the *varhandah* they parted for the night, during which, while Major Mopes lay considering how he might best save George and Ellen, and smother the whole affair, the captain was arranging the manner in which it would be best to communicate the circumstance to the general so as to obtain the greatest possible credit for himself, and secure the immediate dismissal of his apparently favoured rival in the general's consideration. For which purpose, the ingenuous and ingenious gentleman, instead of going to bed, as was his original intention, returned to the barracks and to the quarters of his bosom friend, Ensign Honeyman, whom he had just left, in order to avail himself of his advice: thus, in the very first instance, himself doing all the mischief to Ellen's character and reputation, the preservation of which from injury was to be made the ostensible ground of his communication of the fact to her father.

Honeyman, who was the inseparable companion of Fripps, agreed entirely with his friend on the course to be pursued in order to overthrow Brown ; and it was accordingly settled that the captain should, the very first thing in the morning, make a confidential report to his Excellency of what had occurred.

Meanwhile the unconscious lovers, whose parting kiss formed the subject of contemplation for both the gallant heroes, were thinking of each other and of the happiness which had taken them so completely by surprise, that they could scarcely think what had passed during the evening anything but a bright, yet baseless vision. The old general was the only one of the inmates of the house who slept soundly. He went to bed to rest upon the consciousness of having made two people happy—of having realised his intentions of providing for George—and gratified his wish of giving Ellen the man to whom, insensibly and unconsciously, she had become devotedly attached:—and, above all this, he revelled in the pleasure of having found out their secret, and anticipated any communication on the sub-

ject from either of themselves:—add to this, his just appreciation of George's anxiety to quit the only place in the world which was dear to him—to surrender all the worldly advantages it afforded, to preserve the being he loved from the anger of her parent, the malice of her *friends*—or, putting it as an extreme case, the ills of a marriage with a man who would have nothing but an ensign's half-pay, even if, under the circumstances, he could secure that—and the amount of Sir Cadwalader's self-gratulation may be in some degree ascertained.

The gun had scarcely announced the dawn of day when Captain Narcissus Fripps was up and stirring; there was no time to be lost. It was his turn to ride with the general before breakfast; the opportunity would be favourable; the success of the disclosure was unquestionable. The getting rid of George was his great object; for the captain's jealousy of the interloper, as he considered him, was not so much excited by his evident success with the young lady, as by the favourable estimation in

which the young lady's father held him and his character: and when jealousy takes possession of the mind, it leaves room for no other passions but such as may be made subservient to its own ends, and which may be called into action for its own revengeful gratification.

Lavater says, that " he, who being master of the fittest moment to crush his enemy, magnanimously neglects it, is born to be a conqueror." Captain Narcissus Fripps, whatever heroic deeds he might have been destined to do in other days, did by no means display this evidence of future success; and although George was neither his, nor any other man's enemy, he resolved that two hours should not elapse before he was irrecoverably ruined in Sir Cadwalader's estimation.

The captain was a fair, sickly-looking man, always extremely well dressed, his hair assiduously ringleted on his cheeks and over his forehead. He wore divers rings upon his fingers, and sundry chains around his neck; his clothes fitted him as if they were his skin. His voice was drawling, and he lisped a little.

When he talked, he pawed the air with his hands flappingly, something after the fashion of a kangaroo ; and when he wished to be particularly lively, playfully patted the arm of the person with whom he was conversing, affecting himself always to be excessively shocked at everything that everybody said to him : in short, nobody could exactly make him out. He was considered excessively fine—evidently fancied himself a beauty, and was not quite free from a suspicion of aiding nature in the getting up of his complexion, by borrowing a tinge from art.

To have been treated neglectfully by a young lady of Ellen's qualifications, and that she should so readily have permitted such marked advances on the part of one so unquestionably his inferior in rank and station, (for the Fripps' blood had been ennobled in a remote degree from Narcissus,) was galling beyond measure ; although his attentions to Miss Adamthwaite had never gone much farther than singing to her by moonlight, accompanying himself on the guitar, or making her a pair of card-racks, or painting a couple of rose-buds

on the top of a cotton box. If she sometimes worked at those often-mentioned, indescribable strips of muslin which engage the attention of modern fine ladies, he would thread her needle for her ; and in winding off silk on his thumbs he was most assiduous and skilful. It was therefore the indignity which he considered the circumstance to involve, rather than the jealousy of a lover, which urged him on to ruin George. *His* fate, however, was sealed, and when the horses were at the door, Captain Narcissus felt his heart beat with anxiety for the discovery. "Lie still, little flutterer," said he, as he pressed his hand to his bosom ; and mounting his steed, rode slowly off with his Excellency the Commander of the forces, to make their accustomed matutinal excursion.

Horseback, it must be confessed, whether the pace be a walk, trot, amble, canter, or gallop, is not altogether suitable or convenient for confidential communication ; and when the captain found the general resolved upon adopting the penultimate pace of those enumerated, he felt the difficulty of breaking

the business to him insuperable. Indeed, Sir Cadwallader was not particularly partial to his aide-du-camp's society, and preferred, when circumstances permitted, the company of Major Mopes, who, upon the morning in question, stayed at home to counteract, if possible, the ill effects of the representation which the captain went abroad expressly to make.

After a start of a mile or so, Sir Cadwallader pulled up, and suggested to the captain that they should dismount, and walk up to a rising ground on the other side of a fordable nullah, in order to get a view of the town at a point from which Miss Adamthwaite had made a drawing, but which the general had himself never happened to visit. This was more fortunate for Narcissus than even *he* could have hoped; the place—the subject—all naturally tended to the point he had in view. The “little flutterer” would lie still no longer: the aptness of the opportunity delighted him, and he was decided to avail himself of it forthwith.

“Were you here with Ellen when she made the sketch?” said Sir Cadwallader.

“ Oh ! dear, no, general,” said Fripps, “ I never come out upon sketching parties with ladies : I shouldn’t think of doing such a thing.”

“ I don’t see the harm of it,” said his Excellency. “ In Italy, Ellen used to pass the greatest part of the day in drawing from Nature : it would have been dull work if she had thought it necessary to have remained always alone.”

“ Oh, dear Italy !” said Narcissus, sighing and turning up his eyes—“ the climate is so charming there.”

“ Climate makes no great difference in conduct,” said Sir Cadwallader.

“ No, to be sure,” said the captain, “ but— I am so very particular, I never presume on the good-nature of the dear ladies. Indeed what I see going on with other people sometimes shocks me—not only on account of my own feelings as they regard delicacy, but as far as the honour and happiness of those I esteem and respect are concerned.”

“ Honour and happiness !” said the General,

—“ what the deuce have honour and happiness to do with a water-colour drawing?”

“ Oh ! dear no, general,” said the captain, pawing the air, “ I did not say they had ; but — perhaps to the artist they may be something.”

“ I hope, if you mean Ellen,” said Sir Cadwallader, “ they have a great deal to do with her.”

“ Really, general,” said Fripps, “ I don’t know what to say ; but I have something to tell you which you ought to know.”

“ Why, then, out with it, Fripps,” said Sir Cadwallader.

“ Oh ! I can’t tell you all at once,” said the captain. “ I know you will be very angry — but I’m sure I ought to tell you : and yet I don’t know how I shall ever be able to do such a thing !”

“ What ! is there a plot brewing, or a mutiny hatching ?” said the General.

“ Oh ! no sir,” said Fripps, “ it is nothing public ; it is — oh, I can’t tell you !”

“ Why,” said the General, “ I am not very

particular as to time; only as you have begun, you may as well go on."

"Oh, it's so very fie-fie! Sir Cadwallader," said Narcissus.

"Very what?" said his Excellency.

"Very naughty, sir," replied the aide-du-camp.

"Who is it about?" asked his Excellency.

"That is what I'm almost afraid to say," continued Fripps. "I never was so shocked in my life!—I declare I did not recover myself for two hours after."

"After what?" said the General:—"do speak out."

"I don't know how to explain," said Fripps, wringing his hands like

"Some sad widow o'er her babe deploring"—

"but I'll endeavour."

"Is it anything about my daughter?" said Sir Cadwallader, who, although unaware that any scene had taken place, had long remarked the aide-du-camp's growing dislike of George.

"La, General!—you are such a man," said

Fripps, "I declare, you seem to know everything by intuition."

"Well," said his Excellency, "what has she been doing?"

"I know I shall never be able to explain it quite," said Fripps; "but—I—think I may mention that—people think—I—that is, Mr. Brown—is—rather too free—and particular—and—"

"Umph!" said Sir Cadwallader. "If *I* don't find fault, and *she* does not find fault with his attentions,—that is, if he does pay her particular attention,—there is no great harm in *that*, Captain Fripps."

"No, sir," said the captain; "but I'm sure you cannot guess. It is no fault of Miss Ellen's—that I am certain of:—but—you have no idea. Oh! upon my word—that Mr. Brown—I speak, you know, in confidence to you, sir—but—he is such a rude man."

"Rude!" said Sir Cadwallader—"do you think so? As far—"

"Ah! that's where it is," said Fripps, pawing and ambling about—"I can't—it is some-

thing so very fie-fie — only you ought to know it: but, I declare, I don't know how to say it out."

"When did all this occur?" said Sir Cadwallader.

"I haven't lost a moment in telling your Excellency," said Fripps: "what I saw happened last night."

"Oh!" said the General — (every doubt of George's honourable conduct having been released by learning the date of the affair, whatever it was, which had shocked the delicacy of the exquisite Narcissus) — "was it very bad?"

"I never did such a thing myself in all my life, Sir Cadwallader," said Fripps; "and, upon my honour! I am sorry to have seen it: it has quite upset me."

"You didn't catch them in what the book-makers call 'an interesting situation,' Captain Fripps, did you?" said Sir Cadwallader.

"La! General, you are such a man," said Fripps. "I declare, how you guessed it I cannot think — but you are right: so the mo-

ment I saw it, I said to myself — well ! if ever — Oh ! gracious — to think of the man that his Excellency has raised to his present station ! — to think of—”

“ That will do, captain,” said the General. “ I am quite aware of the excellence of your intentions, and I thank you for your excessive care of Ellen’s interest and prospects : — now let us look at the prospect before us.”

“ Well !” said Fripps to himself, “ if ever I saw such a man !” — “ To think, you know, of that nasty, great, coarse creature, Brown — well, if ever I—”

“ I think she has done it remarkably well,” said the general, putting his hand varhandah-wise over his eyes, to look at the beautiful panorama before them.

“ What, sir ?” said Fripps, ambling about and twiddling his curls.

“ The view,” replied the General. “ That bungalow in the foreground is a beautiful object, and she has made the most of it. It is odd enough, often as I have been on the Mulligopatemy road, I never was here before.”

Fripps looked at his Excellency with amazement, and almost began to repent not having himself been more lively with Miss Ellen, to whose reputed fortune Narcissus would have had no earthly objection, even encumbered with the lady herself.

“And so,” said Sir Cadwallader, returning to the subject, “you surprised *my* daughter and my assistant military secretary in an interesting situation — eh?”

“Upon my word, General, it was not intentional on my part,” said Fripps. “I had just been taking some of Hoffman’s capillaire and water, and a sponge biscuit with Ensign Honeyman at his quarters, where we had been singing some little Sicilian duets to the guitar by moonlight, and time flew so quickly, that it was near eleven o’clock before we thought of separating. When I came home I met Major Mopes at the gate, and we went together through the varhandah, and there — I really — I assure you it is the first time I ever saw such a thing — but there — there — Oh! how shall I describe the scene?”

“ You saw Mr. Brown kiss my daughter, perhaps : — I understand perfectly,” said the General : — “ that’s enough, Captain Fripps; we will settle *that* gentleman’s affair after breakfast. So, come, let us take to our horses, and finish our ride.”

It must be admitted that Captain Fripps felt disagreeably disappointed by the manner in which his Excellency received his account of the glaring indecorum which he had overseen ; but he knew that he was a man of few words, with great promptitude and decision of action, and he still encouraged the hope of seeing his antipathy — the assistant military secretary, most unceremoniously expelled the house in the course of the morning.

Differently, indeed, had the friendly Major Mopes been engaged during the same period. He had seen and conversed with George, who, it must be admitted, elated as he was by the wonderful piece of good-fortune which had befallen him, indulged his playfulness of disposition by leading the major by a very circuitous route to the real state of the case ; indeed he

dexterously avoided coming to the point till he perceived, by his worthy friend's manner and countenance, that he must not carry the joke much further. When he had explained all, and, to establish the certainty of his statement, presented the military secretary to Ellen Adamthwaite herself, in the character of her affianced lover, the major's gratification and joy were complete.

The breakfast, it must be owned, was a trial to the principal performers. Ellen, of course, had been informed by George of the discovery of their parting embrace by the two staff-officers — Mopes still thinking that Narcissus, who was generally occupied by thoughts of himself, had not seen equally clear with himself.

The moment arrived ; the general entered the breakfast-room. Curries, rice, Bombay ducks, Java red fish, eggs, European ham, hump and kabobs, were thickly intermingled with grapes, strawberries, mangoes, and plantains. The grateful fumes of coffee filled the atmosphere ; and the tea, unchilled by the waving

Punkah, sparkled in its cups. Ellen took her seat with downcast eyes, after having received a certain number of paternal kisses from his Excellency ; and Captain Narcissus Fripps, after having shaken hands with George Brown, deposited himself at the end of the table, directly opposite the gallant yet melancholy Mopes, major and military secretary.

As the meal proceeded, Fripps could not help noticing certain looks which were passing between his four companions, especially as even the countenance of the major was every now and then illuminated by a cursory expression more nearly approaching to a smile than he had ever seen them before. The General looked at George ; George looked at Ellen ; and Ellen, affecting to repress his intelligent glances by a half-comic seriousness, was blushing crimson.

Captain Narcissus Fripps began to feel exceedingly awkward and embarrassed. It was clear that his companions were in a confederacy, and that he was, by general consent, "basketed." Very few words were spoken,

and nobody seemed inclined to break the silence. Narcissus felt assured that the General had availed himself of the first moment after their return home to lecture his daughter upon the dreadful impropriety which he had witnessed ; but this he could hardly reconcile with the fact that Brown was placed next her at table, and permitted to look and talk to her, little or much, as suited his fancy ; while the eyes of Ellen plainly exhibited the existence of an intelligence between them—which eyes *will* exhibit in the just degree to which such intelligence extends.

It all at once struck the captain, that upon a principle not unfrequently acted upon,—of doing what in certain circles is called, “wiping it up, and saying nothing about it,” the General meant to take no public notice of the event which he had communicated, but that, instead of kicking the assistant military secretary out of the house, he would give him some detached appointment, which would have the effect of removing him from his present sphere of action, and his nomination to which, would

be attributed to the General's continued and unchanged regard for him, rather than as a manœuvre to separate him from his daughter. This idea the gentle Narcissus cherished ; and perfectly conscious that the embarrassment in which they all appeared involved must have arisen from his solicitude for the peace and honour of the family, and coupling these effects with the absence of all remark from the General, touching the matter, he resolved to act upon the same principle, assimilate his conduct to that of Sir Cadwallader, and take the first occasion to make him sensible of the caution he proposed to adopt, and the course he intended to pursue.

It ought to be mentioned that Captain Fripps was not a very great favourite with anybody at head-quarters. The major indeed called him "Molly Fripps," and that too in a sad and solemn tone ; and George was quite aware that he affected to despise *him*. The stiffness of the breakfast-party would not of itself, therefore, have startled him, but the character of the stiffness of this particular morning puzzled

him exceedingly ; for although little was said, so much more was looked than usual, that never did captain more greatly rejoice than did this of ours, when the repast was terminated by the departure of Ellen.

The young lady's exit was shortly followed by those of the major and George, and once again the aide-du-camp was alone with the General.

" Well, captain," said Sir Cadwallader, " I suppose you think my conduct very strange."

" No, upon my honour ! not, sir," said Fripps : " I quite appreciate it — so considerate — and so wise — and so like your Excellency."

" I am glad you approve of it," said the General : — " but who told you the history of my proceedings since our return home ?"

" Oh ! nobody told me," said the captain ; " I would not talk about it to anybody for the world."

" Then how have you acquired the knowledge of what I have done, and what I propose to do ?" said his Excellency.

“I conclude,” said Fripps, “that your Excellency means to take no notice of what I told you, to the parties themselves, but get rid of Mr. Brown in some way or other, so as to prevent the *eclat*.”

“Prevent the *eclat* of an affair known to two or three people!” exclaimed the General — “no, no.”

“I protest, sir,” said Fripps, “it shall never pass my lips: I have too much regard for Miss Adamthwaite. It would be very shocking, I know, to let it spread; but my duty to *you*, as well as my esteem for *her*, would keep me silent as the tomb upon the subject.”

“You need not restrain yourself, Captain Fripps,” said Sir Cadwallader, “on *my* account or hers.”

“I know, sir,” said Fripps, “that you have been so kind and good to Mr. Brown; and what a shocking vice ingratitude is! — And to think of his venturing to embrace any young lady, and especially your daughter!”

“Did you ever hear an old song that I used

to sing when I was a sub.," said the general :—

‘My mother having heard that Colin he had kiss’d me,
Proposed to the youth that to-morrow we should wed :
To church then we went, paid the parson his fees,
And so got holy licence to kiss when we please.’ ”

“ Oh ! dear, no,” said Fripps, shuddering, and pawing, and making curtsying bows, “ I never heard such a song as *that* in all my life.”

“ Well, it may serve to enlighten you then,” said the General. “ What if Ellen Adamthwaite and George Brown are about to do a similar thing—what should you say *then* ? ”

“ What ! ” exclaimed the captain — “ you *don’t* mean, sir, — that—”

“ I do mean so,” said Sir Cadwallader.

“ What ! that delicate fair creature,” said Fripps, in a soliloquizing tone, “ to—”

“ — Yes, is likely very soon to become *Brown*, Captain Fripps,” said the General.

“ Why, then, the discovery I made—”

“ Was nothing very important after all,” said the General. “ Your kindness and considera-

tion for her and me are nevertheless equally admirable ; only if you had not gone back to your friend Mr. Honeyman's quarters, and told *him* what you had seen, before you mentioned it to *me*, our obligations perhaps would have been somewhat greater."

" Well, I declare, Sir Cadwallader," said Fripps, " I only told him because I—"

" Because you happened to be sure of finding *him* up," said the General, " and you were not so sure of getting hold of anybody else at that time to whom to give the interesting information."

" Oh dear, dear ! — I shall never be able to look at Miss Ellen again," said the captain. " I admit it was — how could you have known it, sir ? — dear me ! — what a deceitful toad Honeyman must be to have betrayed me."

" We will not discuss the matter any further," said the General. " I agree with *you* that it would be irksome for you to associate with my daughter and her husband after what has occurred, and therefore you have my full

permission to resign your aide-du-campship, and join your regiment. I am a plain, blunt man, as you know, and of few words."

"Oh, dear Sir Cadwallader!" said Fripps, "do not force me to leave you: everything may be arranged, and I—"

"I wish you good morning, Captain Fripps," said the General. "My daughter bids me decline on *her* part a scene of leave-taking, and will not in all probability return home until after your departure. Brown's name will be in orders as aide-du-camp this afternoon; and, as I am now allowed only one, you will see the necessity of marching in 'double quick.' Good morning." Saying which, his Excellency retired from the apartment, muttering humourously to himself—

"But never more be officer of mine."

"Well, if ever!" said Narcissus — "dear me—this is most uncommonly unpleasant! I declare I could scratch that nasty creature Honeyman's eyes out, for such a sly trick. I'll go to him—tax him with his conduct:—but I am sure we shall make it up before

we part; because I am quite certain he did not mean to injure me."

And so Fripps went on murmuring to himself, until, to his utter dismay, one of Sir Cadwallader's servants made his appearance with his Excellency's compliments—wished to know when his "things would be ready for moving." This question was conclusive. The circumstance which had occurred—the awkward position in which he had placed himself by his tittle-tattle, and the intentions so evidently displayed in his conduct, all conspired to induce him to exert himself in fulfilling his Excellency's wish for his speedy disappearance. His servant was directed to make immediate preparations for the start; and the captain himself proceeded to Honeyman, to reproach and bid him farewell. Their quarrel was, as the captain had anticipated, soon reconciled; and from the door of his dear friend's quarters, Fripps, after eating a tiffin of fowl-sandwiches, raspberry tarts, and barleysugar-drops, moistened by some lemonade, took his departure to join his regiment at Bombay.

It is strange how much the loss of one, to a constant association with whom we have become habituated, affects us. Ellen, who cared no more for Narcissus than for any other officer in his Majesty's service, naval or military, and in all human probability much less, could not look at his vacant place at tiffin without a feeling of regret. Perhaps this feeling, considering the consequences his removal involved, as far as regarded his worldly circumstances, might have been strengthened by the recollection that, however innocently, unconsciously certainly, and most unintentionally, she herself had been the cause of his ejection. Certain it was, she was out of spirits, and George saw she was. He could not help feeling uneasy at the symptoms he observed, but his anxiety was considerably relieved when he had ascertained that his *friend* was actually gone, and saw that Ellen, when her George filled his chair at dinner, was as much at her ease as she could be, knowing that the events which had occurred during the day were most undoubtedly forming

the topic of conversation at every other table in the presidency.

We must not bestow sufficient space upon the episode of our history, to dwell at length upon the proceedings at head-quarters until the day of George's marriage to Ellen was fixed. When the matrimonial termination to their acquaintance was announced as decided and inevitable, the public opinion of the forty or fifty estimable ladies and gentlemen, who formed the public of the place, turned wonderfully in favour of George. He was a most agreeable person—so clever; and it was so judicious of the General to advance merit, and consult the happiness of his child. And at last the day came, and they were married, and proceeded to pass the honeymoon in the picturesque bungalow which formed the effective foreground of Ellen's last East-Indian view.

The happiness of this most happy pair—for so they were—was not, however, destined to continue long uninterrupted: a sudden attack, and short illness, deprived them in the third month of


their married life of the kind-hearted, generous parent, the founder of their fortunes and felicity. This event, of course, decided them upon returning to England, and induced George to retire from the army. Having entered it, as an officer, much too late to expect in peaceable times promotion, even by purchase, to any valuable extent, he yielded to the solicitations of his Ellen, who had seen enough of military life as a soldier's daughter, not to desire a continuance of it as a soldier's wife. Her tastes,—her pursuits,—were those of retirement and quiet, and the blessing of being so much her own mistress as not to be destined by a Horse-Guards' order to pass ten or twelve years of her life in an East-Indian cantonment or a West-Indian barrack, was too great to be refused. So implicit was Sir Cadwallader's reliance upon George, that, at the old gentleman's death, he found himself, with some trifling limitations, in the possession of property, real and personal, to the amount of upwards of seven thousand a-year.

In this position was George Brown when he

returned to England; and it may easily be imagined that the circumstances detailed in this narrative, when related by himself to his mother and sister upon the occasion of his first visit to them, produced in their hearts and minds sentiments of gratitude to Providence, by which a course of events so propitious to their beloved, deserving relative, had been ordained.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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